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THE OPPONENTS

The Opponents

BY

HARRISON ROBERTSON

AUTHOR OF "RED BLOOD AND BLUE,"
"THE INLANDER," ETC.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1902

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The Opponents

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I

ALTERNATIVES

"*No. 7 three hours and twenty minutes late.*"

Morgan Tunstall stopped before the bulletin board in the Tenth Street Station and stared at the chalked words.

Number 7 was scheduled to leave Louisville at 2.35 P. M. and to reach Nashville at 7.50, which, Tunstall calculated, would put him in the Tennessee capital in time, if he dressed on the Pullman, for the Fogg dinner. He wished particularly to attend the Fogg dinner, for it was given to celebrate the engagement of Tom Lockwood to Miss Fogg, and Tunstall, being happily married himself, was eager to testify his joy at the good fortune of his old chum. But if there was no train to Nashville for more than three hours yet, the Fogg dinner was out of the question, and satisfying himself by inquiry that Number 7 was his only chance and that the bulletin was correct, he left the station,

his keen disappointment nettled by a feeling of personal resentment against the unreliability of railroad time-tables.

He went to his club and loafed there till dinner, after which, with a friend, he crossed the street to the theatre and spent two hours with Jefferson's *Bob Acres*.

It was not long before midnight when he got off a Fourth Avenue car and walked over to Third, where his house was, in a fashionable quarter of Louisville. He was twenty-five, rich, well educated, travelled. Best of all, in his estimation of Fortune's favors, he was married to the woman he loved, and the home he had built as the flower of his wealth and taste was incomparably more to him than that, because his inspiration had been the material expression of his devotion to her and of his anticipation of the life they were to live together, and because he felt that she had understood and was glad, as he was glad, that what he had done was his best, and had been done for her.

As he walked away from the car his consciousness of a day gone wrong had something in keeping with the depressing fog of the chilly atmosphere, which seemed to asphyxiate the

street-lights and, as he stepped from a pavement of concrete to one of brick, to disintegrate the solid earth itself into a soggy sponge. Not only had he missed the Fogg dinner, but Grace, who had been disinclined to go, would not be at home to-night, for she had insisted, before he had started for the Tenth Street Station that day, that she would not brave the loneliness of his absence, but would take one of the afternoon trains from the First Street Station and spend the night with friends in Pewee Valley, a few miles out from the city.

Tunstall's pace was slow, his eyes on the ground, and his healthy mind veering from his irritating ill luck to the marked distinguishing characteristics of brick sidewalks as affected by the weather. In front of his own house he raised his head from this study of brick sidewalks, and his face suddenly glowed with a smile. There were lights in Grace's window. She had evidently reconsidered her plan to go out to Pewee Valley. She was at home. After all, the day had not ended so badly as it might have done.

Tunstall eagerly sought his key and let himself in. The hall and first-floor rooms were dark. The house had been closed for the

night. His unexpected return would be a pleasing little surprise for Grace, — as pleasing, perhaps, he was happy to believe, as his finding her at home was for him.

His swift feet sank noiselessly into the soft carpets of the hall and stairway. He was quickly in front of Grace's door. But as he clasped the knob a strange transformation came over him. His hand on the knob was motionless; his figure stiffened in an abruptly arrested posture; his strong young face grew instantly stronger with the white, stony death of its youth. In the murmur of talk coming from his wife's room he recognized the low, refined voice of Julius Knowles.

For a little Tunstall stood, inclined forward, as one transfixed. Then he breathed again; a tinge of blood crept back into his face; he drew himself up slowly, and half turning in his steps, faltered for a second and leaned with his back against the door frame. He lifted his hand uncertainly toward his collar, but its wavering course was suddenly checked as the fingers closed tensely and the clenched fist was rigidly extended. A dull purple now dyed his skin, his chest deepened, and, as a soldier who had heard the voice of command,

he strode steadily across the hall, erect, with fixed eyes, and disappeared through the opposite doorway.

He returned almost immediately, with the same martial step, with the same fixed eyes, his right hand, which hung by his side, holding a revolver.

He recrossed the hall to his wife's room, and turned the knob. The door was locked. There was an instant hush of the voices within. Tunstall, his jaws set and his veins swelling, braced his shoulder against the door and with one determined strain forced it open.

As he stepped into the room, Grace, blanched and trembling, was standing in the centre of it, her hand on the arm of a chair, from which she seemed to have just risen, her startled, horrified eyes directed helplessly upon him. Only for a moment did she look at him; then turning away, she threw her hands over her face, and with a shivering moan sank to her knees and bowed her head among the pillows in the chair.

Julius Knowles, who, with sickened visage and forehead dampening clammily, had been standing a few feet behind Grace, never took his stupefied eyes from Tunstall, and made no

motion, except once to open his dry lips as if to speak, when no audible word came from them.

Tunstall did not stir for a full quarter minute after entering the room. The two men faced each other silently. There was no sound except the ticking of the clock and the flare of a gas jet; even the convulsive breathing of the woman seemed to have ceased.

When Tunstall did speak he was standing where he had stopped after breaking open the door. His countenance was an expressionless mask, his tones passionlessly inexorable.

"When I came in here," he said, "I intended to kill you both. But instant death is too merciful a fate for such as you. There ought to be, and there is, a greater penalty. I am going to give you the choice between them."

He paused a moment. There was not even a tremor now in the intense stillness of Grace, and Knowles made no sign, except the momentary blinking of his eyelids as he held his gaze on Tunstall.

"The alternatives I offer you," Tunstall went on, "are these: either to be shot dead now, here; or to live together as husband and wife in this city, until one of you dies."

Grace had lifted her head an inch in alert suspense. Knowles twisted his mustache with a nervous hand, and, after a little, asked huskily:

"What do you mean?"

"Simply death, or life together. I shall kill you — both of you — now; or you will elope from this house to-night. You may go where you please for a few weeks, until I have secured a divorce. Then you will return to Louisville, be legally married, and live together as husband and wife here, among those who know you best and will be familiar with your story."

He was silent, awaiting some reply.

"Are you in earnest?" said Knowles uncertainly.

Tunstall waved his hand with a slight motion of impatience.

"Understand me fully," he continued. "I know you are a coward, Knowles. I presume you are armed at this moment — cowards of your kind usually are. If you were a braver scoundrel you might defend yourself and take the chance of killing me and thus escape both the alternatives I offer you. Do not make the mistake of hoping that by agreeing to accept now the second you may merely gain time to

extricate yourself from my conditions. You can never elude me. While you are away I shall always be in touch with you through my agents. You can go nowhere, at no time, that they will not follow you. When you return to spend your wedded lives in Louisville you will always be under their secret surveillance, and you can never leave for an hour without my knowing it. They will never annoy you. They will simply keep you always in sight and inform me if you attempt to break your agreement. In the end you can never escape both these alternatives, except by my death. So choose, with your eyes open."

Knowles now was more like himself. His natural color was returning. For the first time his eyes left Tunstall, and with a plausible effort at coolness he took out his watch and glanced at the hour. There was even a trace of a smile on his lips as he spoke.

"You make it easy for me, Tunstall," he said, still studying his watch. "As far as I am concerned, it will be only a happiness for me to agree to your second alternative."

"Very well," Tunstall replied. "But that requires acceptance by two. And you?" His burning eyes were on his wife, whom an hour

before he had idolized and whom now he could not even address by her name.

Her back was still to him, but she raised herself on her knees beside the chair. She did not turn her head, nor speak.

"What is your choice?" Tunstall demanded.

She took hold of the chair-arm and weakly lifted herself to her feet. She made a groping motion with one hand toward Knowles.

"We — must go," she said feebly to Knowles.

Knowles went to her and supported her with his arm; the two moved toward the door, and, as Tunstall stepped aside for them to pass, they left the room and the house.

II

SIDNEY GARRARD AS A MONEY-MAKER

A LITTLE more than twenty years later, on a certain June morning, in a certain county of Kentucky within fifty miles of Louisville, Sidney Garrard, having finished a breakfast that had been kept warm for him over-time, stepped out on the porch, his hands in his pockets, and a lazy whistle answering the nickered greeting of Blitzen, saddled and waiting him at the stile.

Beyond the grove in which the house was set rolled, on one side of the lane, the pastures, green in the foreground, and merging into smoky steel in the distance, dotted with an occasional oak or sugar-tree and with statue-like cattle, heads down. On the other side of the lane, hedged with blackberry and wild-grape vines, stretched a field of young corn, whose pallid blades stirred above a threatening growth of grass and weeds. Then spread away, to the deep shades of creek and

ravine, the gold of ripened wheat, shimmering in the sun and gently vibrating, perhaps to an imagination more sensitive than Sidney Garrard's just then, with the whir of the reaper which throbbed faintly in the distance.

Sidney Garrard, in his twenty-sixth year, bronze-skinned and clear-eyed, with the grace of sound nerves and of physical vigor, was not very imaginative this morning. He felt a comfort which came of sufficient sleep, a relished breakfast, perfect health, and the knowledge that the day was before him, to be disposed of as he liked.

He sauntered, bareheaded, out on the lawn, where he was standing, a few moments later, passing the conventionalities to his appreciative fox-hounds, when Wash came up the lane from the harvest fields. Wash, black, middle-aged, and active, was the real manager of the Garrard farm, and he was walking with a quicker step than usual.

"Mawnin', Mr. Sid," he said cheerily, touching his hat as he went through the yard.

"Hey, Wash! What's up? What's your hurry?"

"I gwine sen' one de chillun over to John-

son's to see 'f I cain't git some er dem niggers to he'p out in de wheat-fiel'," Wash explained, pausing. "We's sorter short to-day. Sim, he's sick, en Mose, he went en got married ag'in las' night en he ain't been turned out de calaboose yit dis mawnin'. 'Pears lak Mose alluz tekin' a notion to git married ag'in des sho's I git in a pinch; en rain ap' to come up fo de week's out, to-boot."

"Oh, if you are in such hard luck I'll help you out myself till your reinforcements from Johnson's reach you."

"Go 'long now, Mr. Sid," Wash laughed, in his soft, whole-souled way. "Stop yo' projeckin' wid me," walking on and wagging his head.

"I'll report to you in the wheat-field," young Garrard assured him, "as soon as I can dress more properly for the occasion."

Wash only looked back over his shoulder and grinned.

"Mr. Sid, he feelin' mighty peart to-day," he said to himself.

Mr. Sid went into the house, and in a few minutes came out in an old suit of clothes and a wide-brimmed straw hat, dilapidated and drooping.

He mounted Blitzen, and as he turned down the lane he was greeted with a ripple of laughter from a young woman whose face peered out at him over the hollyhock bushes that lined the garden fence.

"What now, Sid?" she called to him.

"Hullo, Kate!" pulling up. "'What now' is a job in the wheat-field; I'm one of Wash's hands this morning."

"And do Wash's hands ride to work on such blue-ribbon winners as Blitzen?"

"This one does; and, what's more, a-wearing in his buttonhole the prettiest rosebud in Mistress Kitty Cockerill's garden."

He rode up to the fence, and Kate Cockerill, smiling and glowing with pleasure, plucked a half-blown Jacqueminot, and stepping up on the bottom board of the fence, reached up and placed the bud in the buttonhole of his coat as he leaned over to her.

"I suppose," he said, "that this is one of those fortunate roses the poet tells about, that got what they wanted because they 'dared to climb.'"

"Perhaps," she returned in the same bantering spirit. "And I suppose what this one

wants is a view of the promised spectacle of Sid Garrard actually at work!"

He laughed and galloped away, flinging back at her a bar of a song, —

"Oh, the red rose is a falcon;"

while she, his widowed sister, and elder by a year, followed his youthful figure with eyes in whose fond smile was the light of a love that was tenderly maternal.

Sid Garrard's work in the wheat-field was only for an hour — and that on a fairly comfortable seat on the reaper — when Wash's reinforcements from Johnson's arrived, and Sid mounted Blitzen and rode to the post-office at Plover, the nearest village, three miles away.

There were perhaps a hundred houses in Plover, scattered along a single street, and before one of these — built of rough brick, with a wooden platform in front of it — Sid Garrard dismounted. A big board sign under the eaves identified it as the establishment of "*Jaynes & Co., General Mdse. and Post-office.*" Sid entered and exchanged jokes with Hi Jaynes, pocketing a newspaper and reading a letter which Hi handed him from behind the glass-and-pine boxes of the post-office. When

he went out on the platform again, the street, which five minutes before had been deserted except for a few pigs and chickens, now presented an added bit of picturesqueness, if not of animation, lent it by the arrival of Dunk Peabody and his annual wagon-load of red June-apples. Dunk, a thin, sallow countryman — "clay-bank" his complexion was described by Uncle Jesse Craik — sang out his wares in a melancholy monotone, as he sat bent over the front of a ramshackle wagon, loaded with apples, above which rose a pollarded sapling, on the stubs of whose cut branches stuck clusters of the red fruit.

Dunk drew up in front of the post-office and discontinued crying his apples, to address Blitzen, who was showing, by flattened ears and warning teeth, his disapproval of any nearer approach of Dunk's team.

"I yi, you pompered plutycrat, you!" Dunk said in a conversational tone, "you thes cain't natchully bear to have the plain people come anigh you, now kin you?"

"Morning, Dunk!" called Garrard from the platform. "What's the trouble between you and Blitzen?"

"I ganny, that sounds like Sid Garrard!

Come outn from under that hat an' lemme see 'f 't aint. Say, what skylarkin' you up to now, Sid? Where 'd you git them clo'es?"

"Where 'd you get that team?" Garrard laughed.

"Well, you know I 'm thes boun' to have a team 'bout this time o' year, when that old apple-tree by the smoke-'ouse gits ready fer business; so I went to work an' borrid the mare from Rufe Wright an' the mule from Uncle Jesse Craik. Th' ain't no sich June-apple in the county as that airn, but I misdoubt me ef it pays fer the time an' labor. I ganny! it took me mighty nigh a week to borry that team this year. Say, Sid, keep yo' eye on 'em while I step in an' see 'f I c'n trade Hi Jaynes a bushel of apples fer a jug of m'lasses. Uncle Jesse Craik an' Rufe Wright don't work overly well together yit — been a-shyin' at each other all mornin', seems like. Though you cain't blame arry one of 'em specially, fer they do look ruther skeercrowy to be drove together 'thout blinkers, now don't they? Say, you oughter seen 'em when they fus got a good look at each other. Back yonder at Carpenter's Hill Rufe Wright — that 's the mare — was dozin' along when she

happen to turn her head an' git a full-len'th view of Uncle Jesse Craik — that 's the mule — an ' she give one snort an' lit out with the whole outfit nor'-nor'east, in a bee-line fer Injianny; an' I had n't no mo'n got 'em back in the road an' straightened out fer Plover ag'in when Uncle Jesse Craik took a notion to see what the nation it was alongside him, anyhow, an' when he see — well, he thes duck his head an' shet his eyes an' open his mouf, an' right-wheel, an' nex' minute he had done unlimbered bofe batteries on the enemy's broadside, an' ef I had n't 'a' been mighty lucky lassoin' him with the lines no tellin' where Rufe an' the rest of us would 'a' been by this time. So you keep yo' eye on that team fer me, Sid. Hi Jaynes, he 's gittin' rich so fas' he 's too grastin' to 'fode mo' 'n one hitchin'-pos', an' that air stall-fed m'nop'list o' yourn, he 's got a corner on that."

"All right, Dunk," laughed Garrard. "I 'll see that your span of 'the plain people' don't run away."

Dunk Peabody slouched into the store, his hands full of apples, and Sid Garrard dawdled down to the wagon and swung up to the driver's seat, where he lounged eating one of Dunk's

apples and smiling at the ingenuity with which Dunk had pieced out odd ends of rope and leather into the harness that united the incongruous "Rufe Wright" and "Uncle Jesse Craik."

The lethargy of approaching noon was on the straggling village. The sun, high overhead, seemed to have drawn every remnant of the morning's fleecy clouds to its own altitude, where, instead of veiling the light, each one appeared as separate softly sifting centres of light, under whose grateful flood the earth basked, lazily outstretched. Far in the blue a pair of great black wings slowly circled. Across the drowsy fields came the drone of a thresher, echoed nearer by the drone of the bees in the clover by the roadside. The pigs had found a bed of mire in the gutter, and were grunting fitfully with sensuous content, while daintily hued butterflies wove lightly over and around them, in the world-old symbolism of the etherial's attendance on the gross. A happy heat-song filled the throat of a young pullet; the stillness was thudded by the hoof-strokes of Blitzen, impatient of the flies, and was pierced by the faint, militant cry of a bee-martin, himself invisible in the sky.

Up and across the street Breckinridge Bodine, justice of the peace, notary public, fire and cyclone insurance and rotary churn agent, as well as standing candidate for the office of county court clerk, came to his door in his shirt-sleeves, smoked his pipe, and looked contemplatively out on the pigs in their wallow. Garrard saw him, and holding up a handful of the fruit, called to him in Dunk Peabody's sing-song, —

"Ap-puls! ap-puls! fresh June-ap-puls!"

Squire Bodine declined with a shake of his head; then suddenly recognizing the apple-vender, removed his pipe from his mouth.

"Hey, Sid Garrard!" he laughed across. "What devilment you up to now?"

Garrard only repeated his sing-song.

"Well, fetch me a half bushel of 'em over here and I 'll see if — "

The squire did not finish his joke. He paused, his pipe again out of his mouth, and his gaze directed beyond and behind Garrard.

"Say, Sid, you know every girl in the county; who 's that burnin' up the road down yonder?"

Garrard turned and his eyes kindled as they rested on the slender figure of a horsewoman riding rapidly toward him.

"Never saw her before," he answered the squire; "but she's at home on a horse, ain't she? Turn your head, Blitzen; *you*'d like to see her."

She dashed up and stopped in front of the post-office, and before Sid Garrard, who had sprung from the wagon, could proffer his assistance, she had dismounted.

As she stood holding the bridle in one hand and looking around for a place to hitch the horse, her eyes swept from the warning ears of Blitzen to the wagon and then to Garrard.

"Ah!" she said. "Won't you hold my horse a moment?"

The words were in the form of a request, but the tone was more an order; not ungracious or arrogant, but assuming obedience as a matter of course.

Garrard touched his old straw hat and nodded compliance. He stepped forward and laid his hand on the bridle, while she, without looking at him twice, went toward the post-office.

It was unusual for a girl not to look at Sid Garrard twice, and unprecedented for one to make a request of him in the tone of an order. There was a touch of red in his tanned face and an amused twinkle in his eyes as he

watched her walk up the steps and across the platform in front of the building. But there was more than amusement in his eyes.

"Gad!" was his verdict, "but she 's a clean-stepping thoroughbred!" and his gaze did not leave the doorway through which she disappeared into the post-office.

She came out in a few seconds with a letter, which she opened and read as she paused at the top of the steps.

She was tall, and there was something about her which suggested that recently she might have been thin, with the thinness of growing youth. Even yet her face would have seemed a little thin but for the slight flush of her ride and the splendidly colorful warmth of the mouth, though the lines of neck, arms, and figure, which a less well-fitting habit could not have concealed, clearly limned no longer the thinness, but the rounding symmetry of youth.

Refolding her letter and sticking it in her bosom, she descended to the cinder sidewalk. As she came up to him again, Sid Garrard held out his hand to help her to mount, and with a light foot she was quickly in the saddle.

"Thank you," she said, and took out a little purse and began searching through its contents.

Sid Garrard watched her, the touch of red in his tan deepening and the light in his eyes beaming merrily.

"She takes me for Dunk Peabody," was his mental verdict, "and Dunk Peabody so let it be."

She handed him a quarter, and he accepted it, but he swept off the old straw hat with such a bow as Dunk Peabody had never made to man or gods.

When he stood erect again, she was gathering up the reins, without any indication that she had even seen his magnificent bow. It was then that Hugh Letcher galloped up.

"Oh! this is lucky," he said to the girl. "I got through that business at Jernigan's sooner than I had hoped. I thought maybe I might overtake you."

"That is good," she answered, with obvious pleasure. "So we may finish our ride, after all."

"Yes, thanks to my lucky star."

"Thanks to my letter, which I lingered to read."

"Blessed be the man who invented letter-writing then. Hello! Is that you, Sid Garrard, under that hat?"

"Morning, Hugh," grinned Sid Garrard.

"So it is you, is it? Ho!" laughed Letcher. "Miss Helm arrived only yesterday and you have met her already, have you? You are making even better than your usual good time, are n't you, Sid?"

"I merely had the pleasure of holding Miss Helm's horse," Sid explained.

"You don't expect me to believe you ever got near enough to a lady to hold her horse without striking up an acquaintance," chaffed Letcher.

Sid Garrard made a vain and ludicrous effort to summon a stern expression of warning to his face, while the girl was looking from one man to the other, a picture of blank bewilderment.

Letcher was laughing heartily. "I do believe," he said, "Sid has been trying to behave himself. Miss Helm, is it possible you do not yet know my old friend, Sidney Garrard, whom you have heard me and Florence and mother and the rest of us talking about ever since your arrival in Kentucky?"

Sid Garrard's hat was off again, but his bow was less exaggerated, while the girl went from red to rose, and from sudden shock to mortifying self-condemnation. She looked hard at

Sid, at first with a little resentment, which quickly melted into contrition and a plea for mercy, then, as she marked the mischievous gleam in Sid's eyes, brightening with a slight smile in her own.

"Please forgive my stupid mistake, Mr. Garrard," she begged. "I — really was in a hurry, and did not — oh, I don't know why I made it!"

She held out her hand to him, a little timidly yet with a frank impulse, and Sid took it with a laugh.

"You could hardly have helped making it under the circumstances, Miss Helm," he replied. "You see, Hugh, I 'd just come out of the wheat-field and was watching Dunk Peabody's team for him when Miss Helm rode up and very naturally took me for Dunk."

"A very likely story, Sid, all except the wheat-field. If I had ever heard of your going into a wheat-field, it would be easier to believe you had come out of one. But ride over tonight, old man, and fix up your explanation at supper. And bring your mandolin, or *I'll* never succeed in making a satisfactory explanation to Florence."

"I shall be delighted," answered Sid, as he

looked at Miss Helm. Then his eyes fell to the silver coin which he still held, and glancing from it to her and noting the new wave of color come into her face and the half-beseeching, half-defiant look settle in her eyes, he deliberately placed the quarter in his pocket and with another bow turned to Dunk Peabody, who was emerging from the establishment of Hi Jaynes as Letcher and Miss Helm rode off.

Sid Garrard stood, with his hands in his pockets, and watched the two figures on horseback until they disappeared over a hill a quarter of a mile away. Then, as Dunk Peabody, who had been filling a sack with apples and grumbling at Hi Jaynes's "grastingness" in a trade, slung the sack over his shoulder and went back into the store, Sid looked across the street again and saw Squire Breckinridge Bodine still smoking in his doorway, his fat cheeks wrinkled with a broad smile as he met Sid's glance.

"Ap-puls! ap-puls! fresh June-ap-puls!" sang out the squire; and Sid, grabbing one from the wagon, threw it with close aim at the dodging justice, and jumping on Blitzen, gave him rein homeward.

III

"BENEATH HER FEET"

KATE COCKERILL, holding her skirts with one hand and with the other fastening at her belt the pinks she had just gathered, had reached the steps of the veranda when Sid Garrard, flushed and in his shirt-sleeves, came hastily through the hall doorway.

"Oh, here you are, Kit!" he cried. "I've been looking all over the house for you. Please do up this crazy tie for me."

Kate laughed as she went up to him and began deftly adjusting the refractory tie. She had a peculiarly cool and invigorating little laugh, which had once come near causing a tragedy. Hardin Drake, one of her suitors, had said to Ben Fairleigh, another of her suitors, that he had always sworn there was no sound this side of Paradise that could be compared to Kate Cockerill's laugh, till one terribly hot night in a hotel room, when his throat was cracked with thirst, and after ringing for water,

he heard the musical tinkle of the ice against the pitcher as it came nearer and nearer far down the corridor. To this Ben Fairleigh had replied that Kate Cockerill's laugh was good enough to drink, but it was n't ice in a water-pitcher; it was more like ice when stirred in a thin glass goblet, with frost on the outside and sugar, fire, and mint on the inside. Hardin Drake had flared up and announced that no gentleman would speak of a lady in the language of a guzzler, and be damned to him; and Ben Fairleigh had retorted that no mollycoddle could teach him anything in the way of respect for a lady, and be damned to him. Then there had been a "difficulty" which had left both participants badly battered, and which had always been regarded in the neighborhood as suspiciously mysterious, as Hardin Drake had curtly explained to an inquirer that the trouble was over a misunderstanding about some short-horns that he had bought from Ben, though anybody could tell you that Ben had never owned a short-horn; while Ben had as curtly explained to the same inquirer that the mistake arose over a game of cards, when it was notorious that Hardin did n't know one card from another.

Kate Cockerill finished that fateful laugh of hers this evening as Sid held his chin high; then she stepped back and surveyed him critically.

"Is it all right now, Kit?" Sid asked.

"It's a masterpiece," she pronounced. "But who is it this time, Sid?"

"Who's what?"

"Your latest discovery? Your new flame?"

"What makes you think of such wild questions, Mistress Impertinence?" he smiled with boyish swagger, seating himself on the railing of the veranda.

"Because I have never known it to fail that when you come to me to get your cravats tied you are just starting on a fresh 'case.'"

Sid laughed and blushed a little. "How about your rule this time, if I tell you I am just going over to the Letchers' to supper?"

Kate sat down in a rocker, and leaning against the back, smiled up at him serenely.

"Who's visiting Florence Letcher now?" she asked.

He tossed back his head in laughter, then flipped a sprig of honeysuckle at her before replying:

"The latest arrival from Olympus, I should say, from the one glimpse of her I've had and

from the way she treads Kentucky farmers beneath her feet."

"So bad as that, and at first sight? And is Olympus in Virginia?"

"It must be. Hugh called her Miss Helm. Isn't that the name of the Staunton school friend of Florence Letcher's that she is always raving about?"

"Margaret Helm? Of course it is. Florence told me the other day she was expecting her. So she has come at last?"

"At last! as all things come to him who waits," said Sid with mock solemnity.

Kate laughed.

"As all things come — and go, you mean," she qualified.

"Other things may come and other things may go, but this — this is final and forever," with sober voice and straightened face.

"So were all her predecessors," laughed Kate. "What is she like, Sid?"

"Like? She isn't like! She isn't like anybody, anything!"

"Describe her."

"It can't be done. She came, brand-new, into the world long after language was invented, and there is none to fit her."

"Is she blonde or brunette?"

"Blonde or brunette! Those are mere words, and poor ones at that. I tell you there are no words that fit her."

"But her hair?"

"Her hair! Why did you speak of it? The mere remembrance of it befuddles me. I don't know whether you would call it golden oak, or cherry, or mahogany, or ebony; but there is only one thing to call it if you want to be accurate: call it her hair — Margaret Helm's hair."

"How tall is she?"

"How tall! O quality of unstrained mercy! When she stood for two whole minutes on Hi Jaynes' platform she was so far above a mortal holding a horse on earth that my eyes set in such an uplifted angle I have been seeing only heaven since."

"And her eyes — what color are they?"

"Her eyes? Margaret Helm's eyes! I was afraid you would ask me that! O Kitty Cockerill, you talk too thoughtlessly. Don't you remember, it was once said of a Kentucky orator that he was like a goose paddling on the ocean, unconscious of the depths beneath? The ocean, now, — you 've seen it,

but do you know the color of it? I've been watching that piece of sky over yonder where the sun has just set. In the last five minutes it has been gray, with a star or two shining through it; clear blue, with stars; clear green, with stars; indigo, violet, purple, always with the stars; and now it is black-and-gray, with the stars; and after a while it will be black-blue, with the stars. And all the time I've been watching that sky I've been thinking of Margaret Helm's eyes, Kit. Now, people have been trying to describe skies ever since people began to talk, or at least to write, but to this good day can they do it? And skies are common, every-day things, and we've had them for centuries, while there is only one pair of Margaret Helm eyes in the world, and I should n't say they'd been here longer than twenty years, at most. Still you sit calmly rocking there, Kate Cockerill, and coolly ask me to tell you the color of Margaret Helm's eyes!"

"I believe it is really beginning worse than usual, Sid," she laughed.

"I won't talk with you any more about her," he said, swinging from the railing to his feet. "You'll be asking me next to tell you what she wore. Is this tie still all right?"

A few minutes later he drove away to the Letchers' behind a spirited trotter, and in a trim buggy that had been well washed not an hour before, — a turnout that was familiar on every road in the county and to every pretty girl within twenty miles. For in this country of fast roadsters and pretty girls Sid Garrard, who loved them both, was much given to driving with them both, — "buggy-riding," as it was commonly called, to the amusement of Northern maids who came as visitors to wonder at the freedom of a custom which permitted a girl to take these long drives with a man, otherwise unaccompanied, and who often remained to acquiesce and even rejoice in that custom.

There was no buggy in the neighborhood that was held in more favor by the young women than Sid Garrard's; and its owner, with a fair companion beside him and with a sure hand on the reins, was ever ready to race a rival or drop behind a party, to speed anywhere or jog nowhere, to pull his horse to a walk under long stretches of shade, or to clip down the white, moonlit turnpike with laughter and song.

As Sid drove up to the Letchers' and threw the reins to a negro who took Sid's seat in the

buggy and trotted off to the barn, it was at the hour when the spell that follows a summer sunset was on the earth; when there was a hush of sound, an arrest of motion, and the going of day and the coming of night were suspended beyond the rim of the horizon, while the serene cavity between the calm of the earth and the calm of the sky was filled by the light that was neither of the day nor night, and that seemed to come from no central source, but from the tender blue of the dome overhead and from the limpid green of its lower circumference.

Old Shelby Letcher, grizzled and lean, was seated in one of the chairs that were grouped on the front lawn. He looked up from his newspaper and waved it with a short jerk of welcome to Sid as he approached. A gray-blue wreath of wood-smoke rose from the rear of the plain parallelogram of brick walls, shingle roof, and wooden veranda of the Letcher homestead. From the same direction came the muffled beat of a rolling-pin, and this, with the querulous plaint of a belated chicken anxiously seeking its roost, was less an infraction than an accentuation of the universal stillness.

"Well, Sid, how are you? Have a seat," Shelby Letcher greeted Sid, with a gesture

that included the entire collection of chairs and benches on the lawn; "have — well, I came mighty nigh getting off that joke they used to tell on that Congressman down in Alabama. You remember? He was what the darkeys call one of those 'pompious' chaps, who show from top-knot to spur the cock-of-the-walk opinion they have of themselves. He stepped into a State office one day and introduced himself.

"'I am James Madison McCrory,' said he. The official rose to the occasion. 'Pleased to meet you, Mr. McCrory,' he replied. 'Take a chair, sir; take two chairs.'

"Now you've got such a conquering-hero look on you this evening, Sid," the old gentleman concluded, "I was about to ask you to take several chairs."

Sid was a favorite of Shelby Letcher, who was fond of joking him, and whose jokes were always received in good part by Sid. But the young fellow's color grew a little warmer as he sat down, and there was an unaccustomed self-conscious note in his laugh as he responded:

"Thank you, Mr. Letcher; I will take two chairs — for me and my mandolin."

"Me and my mandolin, hey? Hum! from

all I can hear, that is a combination that requires, off and on, about all the chairs in the county. But what's going on? Have you been to Yardley lately?"

"Not for two or three weeks."

"Then you don't know the straight of this talk about the Republicans putting out a full county ticket at the next election?"

"No, sir; but from what I've heard, that seems to be the programme."

"By the Lord! what are we coming to? Why, we'll be having Republicans running for the Legislature and for Circuit Judge next! Now, what would you think of that?"

"It would n't do them any good to run, would it?"

"Good? But would it do us any good? Think of the impudence of the thing! It's all that fellow Kirkland's doing. He's feeling his oats from the Federal bin too much. He thinks, because he's got a Government office and a few of his henchmen are riding around as deputy marshals, he can foist a Republican party on this county!"

"I don't know much about these things, Mr. Letcher," Sid returned, pulling a spear of grass from its sheath, "but don't you think it might

be an advantage to have two good political parties in the county?"

"Two good political parties? Maybe so. But what the Tom Walker has that got to do with the Republican party? I agree with you, Sid, you don't know much about these things, — you don't know any more about them than I know about that banjo of yours."

It was in a section of the State where there had been only one political party since the old days of the Whigs and the Democrats, and though Kentucky had been pretty evenly divided in sympathy between the Northern and Southern factors of the civil war, Luttroll County had been almost wholly pro-Southern, and since the reorganization of the Democratic party in the State, after the restoration of peace, had known no other partisan affiliation. It was not fashionable — by many it was not considered respectable — to be a Republican in Luttroll County, and while there were a few white men who voted the Republican ticket at National elections, the Republicans had neither party organization nor spirit in the county. Shelby Letcher was a Democrat of Democrats, at least in name and action, and it was his pride to be called, as he sometimes was by

the *Yardley Gazette*, the Old Hickory of Luttroll. Indeed, with his gaunt form, his sharp visage, his keen, deep-set eyes, his small head, and wiry shock of pepper-and-salt-colored hair, he had known the pleasure more than once of being likened in appearance to Andrew Jackson; and sometimes he swore "by the Eternal." He would have resented now the imputation that he was not a Democrat as vigorously as he would have resented the imputation that he was not a white man.

Sid Garrard lifted his head quickly as a light step came from the house, and he looked beyond the figure of Florence Letcher walking toward him, but he looked in vain. No one was with Florence, no one was following her; and that was not as Sid Garrard wished or had expected.

Sid talked almost as freely and confidentially to Florence Letcher as he talked to Kate Cockerill, and he liked her, as a chum, as well as he liked Hugh Letcher himself. Florence was a girl to inspire such liking. She took an unaffected interest in Sid and his gallantries. She was jolly, companionable, genuine. She was a true daughter of old Shelby Letcher, without his occasional simulation of austerity.

She had his cheerful temperament, his small head, his unmanageable hair, and, more striking than other resemblance, his shrewd, smiling eyes, — eyes which in the father seemed to smile even in his austere moments, as if at his own posing, and which in the daughter seemed to smile because it is as natural and necessary to smile as it is to breathe.

She sat with the two men on the lawn, soon directing the talk from politics and amusing her father with the story of Sid's adventure of the morning.

" Mistook Sid for a wagon-driver, did she?" the old gentleman commented. " Well, I don't reckon a pretty girl could stay around here long without learning the difference between a wagon-driver and a buggy-driver, could she, Sid?"

Hugh Letcher joined them soon, and Mrs. Letcher came out on the veranda for a moment and spoke a word of greeting to Sid; but his repeated glances toward the house were unrewarded. Margaret Helm did not appear, and this, trivial as it was in itself, was not to his liking. He had arrived a little ahead of time in his desire for a second meeting with Margaret Helm, but he might as well have saved

his mare's wind. Could it be possible that Margaret yet felt some constraint or embarrassment from her mistake of the morning? If that was the cause of her delay in showing herself this evening, Sid Garrard could more than forgive it. Indeed, he looked forward with satisfaction to the pleasure of putting her at her ease, for he knew that an acquaintance begun under such conditions is often better begun and farther advanced than by weeks of conventional intercourse.

IV

"VERY, VERY NICE, OR HORRID"

IT was not until they went in to supper that he saw Margaret. She was standing at the sideboard, where she was just completing, as Mrs. Letcher explained, the famous Helm salad.

So she had remained indoors to make a salad, Sid reflected. *That* was less to his liking than his first assumption, that she had remained indoors to avoid him.

Nor was there the slightest indication of constraint or embarrassment as she turned from the sideboard to speak to Sid.

"Good-evening, Mr. Garrard," she quietly said, smiling pleasantly over the ladle which she held, as if he were any ordinary acquaintance.

It was altogether different from the meeting that Sid had anticipated. There was no occasion for him to be genially magnanimous and put her at her ease. Worse than that, there was no opening for anything like that mutually assumed attitude of frivolous familiarity, with

its only partially concealed possibilities of serious developments, often inspired by some such contretemps as their first meeting.

"It 's a poor sort of girl that has no coquetry about her," was Sid's verdict as he took his seat at the table, and his dissatisfaction at that particular moment was increased by his knowledge that instead of finding any evidence of self-consciousness in Margaret Helm, he was himself a little self-conscious. That was a new feeling for Sid Garrard in the presence of any girl.

But before the supper was over he revised his verdict as to Margaret Helm's lack of coquetry. "It 's natural enough with her when she likes," he concluded. "She carries it very well with Hugh, and she 's a genius when she gives old Shelby Letcher a touch of her mettle."

To Sid Garrard it was not a satisfactory supper. He was seated between Mrs. Letcher and Florence, while Margaret Helm was on the other side of the table, between Shelby Letcher and Hugh. Sid, therefore, had a good view of her, but he had little more that he would have expected of any girl who knew how to improve agreeably such an opportunity as that offered

by the unconventional meeting of Margaret and himself. Most of the talk at the table was general; certainly nothing that Margaret said to him, even in answer to one or two direct questions of his own, was addressed any the less to the others than to him. He was consequently quieter than was his wont.

Once, however, he turned to Florence and asked:

"Tell me, what do you call that dress Miss Helm has on?"

"The name of the material, you mean?"

"I suppose so, yes, of course; what is it made of, you know?"

"Organdie," smiled Florence.

"Organdie? Seems to me I've heard of that sort of dress before, but this is the first time I ever saw one."

"Oh, no, it is n't," she laughed softly.

"Yes, it is," he reasserted; "I noticed it almost as soon as I saw her standing over there by the sideboard, and I noticed it particularly when she walked across to take her seat at the table."

"That was because Margaret is one of those girls who give distinction to their clothes. But you've been seeing organdie dresses all your

life. Kate has several, and I have on one now."

"No?"

He turned his head and stared at her, reddening a little and grinning cheerfully.

"Precisely like Margaret's," she assured him, "except that hers has a green figure and mine a pink."

"Well, I never did know much about dresses, anyway," he surrendered; "but even you also sometimes make mistakes about them. Now, hers is n't green, because it 's blue."

"It is n't blue, because it 's green."

"But how can it be, when you know green always makes one look ghastly?"

"There are different greens. You 've never noticed that the green of the trees and plants makes any one look ghastly, have you?"

"By George! I never thought of that!"

"It must be because it is a living green. And Margaret is a girl who can wear any shade of green because she makes even the deadliest colors living colors."

"That 's a compliment to pay a girl! I 'll save it and get it off to her some day as if it were my own."

The one time when Margaret turned her

eyes and words to Sid Garrard with a personal directness was with what was clearly intended as mild disapprobation. Shelby Letcher had been telling some stories on Uncle Minus, the old negro who tended the vegetable garden and kept the kitchen supplied with wood.

"Is n't he delightful?" Margaret laughed.

"Uncle Minus and Margaret are already fast friends," Florence explained. "She spent nearly an hour this evening sitting on the woodpile and listening to Uncle Minus's talk while he was chopping the stove-wood."

So, Sid reflected, that was where Miss Helm had been while he was waiting for her on the lawn.

"He was telling me about what he called his sums," Margaret said.

"Then he was in his element," Shelby Letcher proclaimed. "The old fellow certainly has remarkable powers in working out all sorts of difficult problems in mathematics, though he does not know one figure from another. He can shut his eyes and do in his head sums which I could never do with a ream of paper, and which neither of my children, though I've given them both a good education, could solve with the aid of their algebra or

calculus. How he does it nobody knows; but he does it, and it is marvellous. He has been written up in the newspapers, and a museum man came out here once to try to get him to give public exhibitions."

"He 's a long way ahead of the educated pig or the automatic chess-player," said Hugh.

"I 've never yet known any one to give him a problem he could n't solve," added Shelby Letcher.

"He confessed to me to-day that there was one," Margaret declared, "and I think it is shameful," with an open smile of reproach levelled at Sid Garrard, which made him feel a culprit, yet content to be a culprit since his guilt compelled a personal recognition from this indifferent young woman across the table.

"What could that have possibly been?" asked Shelby Letcher.

"I think it a really distressing case," with the same half-serious smile, which was now, however, no longer directed pointedly on Sid. "He was telling me to-day that nobody had ever given him a sum which he could not work out, until about a year ago, when Mr. Garrard gave him one that had 'stumped' him ever since."

"Mr. Garrard? Who — Sid?" interjected Shelby Letcher.

"Yes, sir — Mr. Sid, Uncle Minus called him. He says it has pestered him a heap; that he lies awake night after night trying to think it out, and that often he is des bleedzed to stop in his tracks a whole spell in de middle of his work and wrastle wid dat sum."

"The old rapscallion!" laughed Shelby Letcher. "Well, I can testify to his stopping in the middle of his work. You can see him almost any sunny day out there in the garden standing stock-still, propped up on the handle of his hoe. But he don't seem to be wrastling with anything. He seems to be asleep usually."

"He says," Margaret continued, "that he has n't had a good night's sleep nor done a good day's work since Mr. Garrard gave him that sum, but that he knows he can find the answer, and is going to do it yet, even if he has to quit taking time to sleep and eat at all."

"And work," added Hugh.

"And what was the sum?" asked Shelby Letcher. "Did he tell you?"

"Oh, yes, after insisting that if I knew the answer I was not to enlighten him. The problem, in his own words, was this: 'A man, he

went up in a b'loon. Atter while de man, he shot off his pistol. Well, suh, de bullit en de soun' uv de pistol, dey bofe hit de groun' at de ve'y same time. How high wuz de b'loon?'"

"Sid," said Shelby Letcher, after the round of laughter with which this was received, "I'll have to forbid you associating with my negroes if you are going to disable them with such problems as that."

"Don't you think that Mr. Garrard ought to go to Uncle Minus and confess that it was only a joke?"

Margaret began the sentence as if addressing it to Shelby Letcher and ended it with her eyes fixed on Sid Garrard.

Sid, who had laughed heartily at her excellent imitation of Minus, shook his head.

"No, no, Miss Helm! Uncle Minus would never forgive me now, and there's too good a friendship between us to be sacrificed in that way."

Afterwards it occurred to him to wonder why Miss Helm herself, taking Minus's troubles so to heart, had not explained to the old fellow the trick that had been played on him, and he finally decided that she had not done so because of a delicate consideration for the man

who had played the trick. It was a little thing, but it was more than a little significant of her character, was his verdict. "That girl," he concluded, "is as fine as she looks."

After supper there were smoking and chatting on the veranda. Sid and Hugh played a little on the mandolins; two or three young men called; and a few minutes later Florence slipped through the open parlor window to the piano, beckoning Sid to follow, and soon to the music of piano and mandolin couples were waltzing through the long hall and wide parlor. Margaret was in great demand as a partner, though hardly more than pink-cheeked Mrs. Letcher, who insisted that dancing kept her young. Even old Shelby Letcher, who smoked and looked on from the veranda, finally knocked the ashes from his pipe and scraped gallantly up to Margaret.

"As Minus says," he bowed, "I haven't 'shook my foot' for twenty years, but I'd confess myself an ungalvanizable mummy if I couldn't turn a waltz with such a dancer as this lady."

Margaret's pleased, girlish laugh and courtesy, so different from the dignity of her manner to himself, was not lost on Sid Garrard.

"There's one thing certain, Florence," he abruptly remarked: "a fellow never is in such high favor among your sex as when he is a very young boy or a very old man."

Florence turned her head to him with a quick laugh.

"Then what have you to complain of, Sid?"

"That I am at that most uninteresting age to you all, twenty-five."

"Don't tell your age then, Sid," she confidentially advised, "and don't tell the girls you think yourself uninteresting to us: they would n't believe you."

"I don't know that I believed it myself not so long ago."

"Who is she this time, Sid, and what has she been doing to you?" with affected sympathy.

"Oh, let up on that sort of thing, Florence. Do you suppose a fellow never outgrows anything?"

"Don't be in a hurry to outgrow things, Sid. We could n't do without you, just as you are."

He played waltz after waltz with Florence, his eyes following the lithe grace of Margaret's form as she danced from parlor to hall and his

ears intent for every note of her mellow laughter as she disappeared beyond the line of his vision in the hall or on the veranda. Finally he sprang from his chair, shoving Hugh into it. "Play awhile," he said, "and let me try a round or two."

He went straight over to Margaret Helm, tapped the shoulder of the man she was dancing with, and with hardly an interruption of the waltz, took his place as he stepped aside.

"I see you have already become reconciled to our custom of 'breaking in,'" he said, "though you did seem rather surprised when Bob Nixon first tried it with you to-night."

"Did you notice that?" she smiled. "Though I had heard of the custom, I was surprised, at first, by its novelty and abruptness."

"I could see it was new to you."

"Yes; it was my first experience."

"I cannot understand why, even if the custom was unknown there before, it did not originate instantly and spontaneously wherever you have danced."

"Evidently," and there was an indulgent curve of the tantalizing lips, "you have other customs here not so exceptional as 'breaking in.'"

"Yes; we are given to speaking the truth freely and fearlessly."

She did not seem to consider it worth a reply, and he guided her through the hall to the veranda.

"I had begun to think," he said, "that if I was to see anything of you again I should probably have to hang around the post-office and take my chance of another opportunity to hold your horse."

She looked at him a moment before she replied, and there was a play about her lips which he knew was bewitching, even though he doubted that its meaning was entirely flattering to himself.

"I should hope not," she said; "for I am sure you dance quite as well as you hold horses."

The response was another disappointment to Sid. There was nothing in the tone or in the words to indicate that she realized how completely the first formal barriers to a delightful intimacy had been, or should have been, demolished by the manner of their meeting at the post-office. He had even put his hand in his pocket with the purpose of introducing as an exhibit accompanying his next remarks the

coin which she had given him, but as she spoke he withdrew his hand, empty. Clearly such remarks would be, at least for the present, wasted. He restrained them and forced a platitude.

"You are fond of dancing?" he asked.

"Oh!" she said, her foot tapping the floor and the rhythm of the waltz seeming to pulse to the very tips of the ribbons at her waist and throat, "is there any one who is not?"

Mrs. Letcher appeared in the door, laughing and fanning, after a waltz with Nixon. The impetus of the music was still in her motion; she held out her hands to Margaret; in an instant the two women were in each other's arms and were waltzing the length of the veranda.

Sid, with a laugh, caught Nixon and swung into the measure.

"I say, Nix," he asked, "is the New Woman to dispense with man even in the dance?"

As he drove home, his mare was allowed to pick her own way. The reins were relaxed in one hand, while with the other he twisted abstractedly an unlighted cigar between his teeth. The evening had not been what it should

have been. His acquaintance with Margaret Helm had not advanced as he had expected it to do.

"Did you have a pleasant time last night, Sid?" Kate Cockerill asked at breakfast.

Sid carefully buttered a roll before he replied:

"You know you wanted me to try to describe her yesterday, Kit."

"Her?"

"Miss Margaret Helm. You questioned me about her complexion, her height, her hair, her eyes. But you omitted the most important item — her mouth. If I could describe her mouth, I might describe Margaret Helm. It is of many shapes, that play one into another. It is rather large. Its color is a warm rose. And, then, it is a mouth which always seems to be saying something, or to have just said something, even when she is not talking. Some of these writers compare mouths to bows. Well, hers sometimes looks like the prettiest bow just after it has shot at you its keenest arrow. So far as I know, she never really said any such thing, but my most distinct memory of her mouth now is that it had just addressed me in some

such words as these: 'Little boys should be good!'"

"Oh!" laughed Kate. "I am going to call on her at once and see for myself. I'm sure from your account of her that she is either very, very nice, or horrid."

V

A HOUSE IS PAINTED

KATE called that day, and Sid accompanied her.

"Well," he said, as they drove away, "I don't think I need to ask you whether you found her very, very nice, or horrid."

"No; I really believe, Sid, she is as nice as you imagined the others — at first."

"There are no others."

"There never are!"

"I'm glad, Kit, that I'm not disappointed in you: I should have been disappointed in you if you had not found her nice. I don't care to admit the right of any one but myself to find her horrid."

"And I'm glad that you're glad you're not disappointed in me. She impresses me as a girl that women and the nicest men will always think nice."

"Nice! nice! What a glib little word, and what a lot of things not in the dictionary you

women mean by it! And how easily you prove that I 'm not one of the nicest men!"

"I don't see."

"Don't I reserve the right to think her horrid?"

"But were n't you glad that I was not disappointed in her?"

"I have always struggled under the handicap of a too clever sister."

Thus began a summer that had been altogether unprecedented in the life of Sidney Garrard. From his boyhood regarded almost as one of the Letcher family, few were the days after Margaret Helm's coming when he did not take advantage of these terms of intimacy. "Come oftener and stay longer," had immemorially been a phrase which Shelby Letcher employed on the departure of visitors whom he liked. It had been addressed to Sid many a time, but not until this summer had he ever been impelled momentarily to differentiate it from others of Mr. Letcher's stock phrases, such as, "We 're needing rain," or "The worst Democrat is better than the best Republican." Now, however, as Sid heard the familiar valediction, on more than one occasion he glanced into the deep-set eyes of the old gentleman in

search of a twinkle of new significance, as ready to meet it, if he had found it, with an answering twinkle of frank comprehension.

But, much as he saw of the Letchers, he saw far less of Margaret Helm than he wished to see — or, at least, far less in the way he wished to see her. He found little opportunity to monopolize her, as he had always inclined to monopolize the girl he liked best, or thought he liked best, for the time. When he was in Margaret's company, others usually shared that privilege. Hugh and Florence were to be taken into consideration. Mrs. Letcher still accounted herself, and was accounted by them, one of "the young people." Even old Shelby Letcher, prone as he had always been to talk politics, seemed more partial than ever to Sid's society since Sid's society now usually included Margaret Helm's society. Besides, the Letchers' had long been such a popular resort among the young folks of the neighborhood that old Shelby had dubbed his house "Letcher Tavern," and since Margaret's coming this popularity had so increased that Shelby canvassed the advisability of expanding Letcher Tavern into Letcher Caravansary.

Letcher Tavern was now the centre of much

gayety, and Sid Garrard and his mandolin perforce contributed their part, notwithstanding his preference for a quieter summer. Here originated many picnics and excursions through the countryside. Here were tennis tournaments, garden parties, house parties. Always when nothing else was doing there were evening callers, many of whom came to supper and some of whom stayed to breakfast. Sid Garrard accepted the situation, whereas he had formerly been accustomed to make it. He was not contented with it, yet he preferred it to any which he was now able to make. His confidence in his powers and resources suffered. He was no more a monopolist than were any of the other young men who frequented Letcher Tavern. He had succeeded in securing but one "buggy-ride" with Margaret Helm alone all that summer.

But another and different pleasure was sometimes his, thanks to Kate Cockerill. That was the responsibility, the dignity, the new attitude of consideration imposed upon him as host to Margaret in his own house. Margaret and Kate had soon become friends, and several times Kate had Margaret and Florence with her for a day or two. Once she had Margaret

alone to spend the night with her, — a night when Sid lay long awake as the leaves at his windows whispered exquisite things to him. To see Margaret Helm, bright and happy, in his own home, to sit with her at his own table, to know that she was asleep under his own roof, — these were new and subtly tender sensations which Sid Garrard could not have expressed as well as the whispering leaves expressed them for him. Kate had not been a friend of any of the girls whom Sid had at various periods of his life "monopolized;" and none of them had ever been her guest for a night. Besides, Sid was convinced now that he had never known a real girl before he met Margaret Helm.

When Margaret left next morning, after that first night she spent with Kate Cockerill, Sid strolled away through the pasture until, coming to a clump of oaks, he threw himself on the thick grass in the shade, where he lay on his back, his hands beneath his head and his eyes to the sky. High above the white cloud wisps drifted and the sun hung far and contracted, as if with eye half closed against the very brilliance of the day he had created. A haze of heat shimmered over the stretching corn-fields

and the rim of distant woodland. Somewhere vibrated the notes of a yellow-breasted lark, — not the ringing challenge which he sounds from the sky, but the quivering trill which he ripples from thorn-bush or mullein spike, the veritable voice of midsummer noontide. Nearer, more pervasive were the drone of bees and the browsing of cattle, and nearer still Dodona's oracle of the night before murmured, as then, in the whispering leaves.

Later Sid took a long walk over the farm, and was surprised to note, notwithstanding Wash's management, how much room for improvement there was on every hand. That afternoon Kate Cockerill came upon Sid standing on the lawn, his legs spread wide, his hands in his pockets, gazing reflectively at the house.

"How long has it been since it was painted, do you reckon, Kate?" he asked.

"I'm sure I don't know. Oh! yes, I do, too! It was the same year the Letchers' house was painted, so I've heard them say."

"And when was that?"

"In — in — oh! what year was it? At any rate, it was what Mr. Letcher calls the year that Samuel J. Tilden was elected President."

"So? From the looks of the paint are you

sure it was n't when Andrew Jackson was elected President? But it 's a shame, is n't it, I 've let the old place run down like this? Why, it simply is n't fit for a girl like — like you to live in, Kit! "

Kate stooped to break off a calycanthus bud, and back of the smile which she gave the purple flower was a resolve to have Margaret Helm spend another night with her at the first opportunity.

And when, two weeks later, Margaret did spend another night with her, carpenters, painters, and paper-hangers had renovated the place, and Sid Garrard played the host with a new dignity and heard a new note in the song of the leaves at his windows.

Nor did his interest in making a suitable habitation for a girl like Kate stop here. He was surprised to discover how much in need of repairs were the fences, and he daily astonished as well as delighted Wash now by taking some active part in the management of the farm. Indeed, so much of his time was given to this new impetus that even his visits to Letcher Tavern became a little less frequent — noticeably so, perhaps, for it was during these weeks that Shelby Letcher, in bidding him good-night,

was once heard to add a qualification to his usually unqualified formula:

"Come oftener and stay longer — and why the Tom Walker have I got to tell you to, Sid?"

And it was during these weeks that on at least two occasions Kate Cockerill, finding herself alone with Margaret Helm, suddenly and without any apparent reason in particular, threw her arms around her and kissed her with —

"Oh, Margaret, you are such a dear!"

It was about this time also that Kate in her chats with Sid began to note in his philosophy a strain, if not of humility, of a certain lack of self-confidence, which was absolutely new in his manifestation of himself, either real or superficial. It had never been apparent in his devotions to any of the heroines of his "buggy-rides." On the contrary, he had always borne himself in those affairs with a cheerful self-sufficiency and an unconscious reliance on the adequacy of his own openly asserted interest to command a response in kind that were at once very fine to see and very effective in proving their power.

But it was not thus that he always bore himself this summer.

"Kit," he abruptly said one afternoon, as he lay in a hammock, while his sister sat near, looking over the newspaper which he had thrown aside, "do you believe in that old notion that a man can't be certain whether a woman will accept or refuse him until he asks her?"

Kate seemed to finish reading a paragraph before she turned from the paper and replied:

"Why, yes; that is, in many cases. Many women themselves never know whether they will accept or refuse a man until he asks them."

"Oh! I'm not speaking of them. Many of *them* don't know even after a man has asked them. I'm referring to — well, women who have minds of their own and can make them up for themselves."

"But it is not a question of mind — altogether — with the women you are referring to."

"Well, whatever it is, don't you suppose a man with a head of his own may always know the answer before he asks for it — if it's No?"

"But has a man, under those conditions, always a head of his own?"

"Perhaps I might use some of your own

words and say that his knowledge of the situation is not a question of head — altogether. Anyway, he knows when it 's No without asking."

"Then why does he ask?"

"Sometimes he does n't. When he does — why? Well, why do things with heads insist on butting them against walls? Why do things with wings fly straight into flames? Why does a fellow who knows there is no hope still hope there is hope? Why has he just got to make her tell him what he knows already? Why has he got to talk to somebody about it, and most of all to her who cares least about it? Now, Mrs. Kitty, if you don't understand don't say that I have n't done my best to enlighten you."

He got up and started away. Kate, whose tone had been one of levity and whose smile had been that with which she usually bantered him, suddenly sobered and laid a detaining hand on his arm for a moment as he passed her.

"I think I do understand, Sid," she said gently. "But don't be too sure you do, and don't be too impatient. Girls are not like men."

"Oh, girls!" loftily. "Bother girls! Of course they are not like men. And any particular girl — she is liable to be not even like girls, is n't she?" and he walked away whistling shrilly to a long-eared hound that loped across the lawn to join him.

VI

AT TUNSTALL PADDOCKS

ONE afternoon in the middle of August Kate Cockerill and Margaret Helm, Hugh Letcher and Sidney Garrard, returning from a drive along the Old Mill Road, and being overtaken by a sudden storm, stopped at Tunstall Paddocks for shelter. Tunstall Paddocks had once been a stock farm of some celebrity, but for years now its owner, Morgan Tunstall, had not lived on the place, except for a month or two occasionally in the summer; having long since sold out the strain of thoroughbreds which had made the reputation of the farm, and having left it in the hands of a none too energetic "manager," who was satisfied if it produced average crops of grain and hay, and enough cattle and hogs for his own use.

Kate Cockerill and her party had hardly taken possession of the broad porch before the storm broke. A servant, in answer to their ring, had informed them that Mr. Barnes,

the manager, was in Plover, while Mrs. Barnes was in bed with a sick headache, but hoped they would make themselves at home; and there were melons and buttermilk in the spring-house, and cider and blackberry cordial in the dining-room.

Kate ran up to see Mrs. Barnes, and returning in a few minutes found the others of the party seated on the porch, while the wind and rain were swaying the trees and the water was gushing down and overrunning the gutters.

"What a splendid old place it is!" Margaret Helm was saying, as she looked out at the great forest trees and beyond to the meadows, undulating dimly through the rain like billows in a fog.

"What a splendid old place it has been, and could be made again!" Hugh qualified. "It's a pity it does n't belong to some one who would take more interest in it."

"Think what it would be," Sid suggested, "if Morgan Tunstall took the interest in it that he takes in politics."

"Is Mr. Tunstall a politician?" Margaret asked.

"Politician!" exclaimed Hugh. "Absolutely, irretrievably. He lives on politics. He

has taken to politics as some men take to drink or gambling. They say it is his one passion, and that he cares for nothing else."

"Is he successful?" Margaret continued. "I don't remember to have heard of him."

"He lost his first game, I believe," Hugh replied; "but since that he always wins. At least, so father says, and father is a great authority on the life and times of Morgan Tunstall. But Tunstall has not sought office for himself. He does n't seem to care for it. He plays the game of politics because it gives him something to do and affords him a chance for the exercise of power. He plays it for the game, not for the stakes. In short, Miss Margaret, if you will pardon my illustration, he plays it as a game of chess rather than as a game of poker."

"Which is n't a good illustration, Hugh," Sid dissented; "for if Miss Margaret will also pardon me (I know Kate will, as she plays a good hand herself), there is n't a greater game, as a game, than this same poker. The master poker player must not only play cards, but he must play people in a superlative degree, and it 's the same with the game of politics, as you define it, is n't it? At any rate, I believe, with

your father, that Morgan Tunstall is a great man, and that it is a pity he does n't go in for the stakes and take some of the offices."

"Where does he live, and why does he abandon such a home as this?" were Margaret's next questions.

"He lives in Louisville," Hugh answered, "though once in two or three years he spends a few weeks here. As to why he abandoned the place — well, there is a story connected with that."

"Oh, a story!" Margaret exclaimed expectantly. "Could there be a better time and place for a story?" drawing her chair an inch nearer Hugh's.

"Unfortunately, there is not enough known about it to make a very effective story. All that is clear is that Tunstall married, in his early twenties, a Louisville girl, and brought her here to live. But she did not like the country, and in less than a year he took her back to Louisville, where he provided a handsome home for her. They were supposed to be happy, but one morning the town was startled to find that Mrs. Tunstall had eloped with Julius Knowles, a well-bred and popular fellow who had never been suspected of being a

scoundrel. They say Tunstall took it coolly. He got a divorce, and when the couple married and actually had the effrontery to return to Louisville and brazen it out by living there, he never betrayed that he was aware of their existence. He has never made his home at Tunstall Paddocks since."

"It is a pitiful, horrible story," was Margaret's comment, with a soft gravity of tone and face.

"It is terrible," echoed Kate.

"One of the contemptible things about the case I have not mentioned," Hugh went on. "As I said, Tunstall acted coolly and ignored the pair when they returned to Louisville, and this, to some extent, was held against him. It is, or used to be, the unwritten law of this country that the one thing left to be done by a man wronged as Tunstall was wronged was to kill the man who wronged him. Because Tunstall paid no attention to this law, I have heard that he was long suspected by many of cowardice."

"No one who knows Morgan Tunstall," Sid declared, "would believe there is a drop of cowardly blood in his body. No one here has believed it since he defied that mob and saved

the life of that negro boy whom the badly scared sheriff of this county was about to surrender to the lynchers."

"But many believed it at first, Sid. That was why, when he took up politics as a pastime, he lost his first game."

"I don't see how any one who ever saw him could doubt Mr. Tunstall's courage," said Kate. "Come and look at his portrait, Margaret."

The two girls went into the house, and when they came out a few minutes later Margaret's expression was one of unusual thoughtfulness.

"Well, what did you make of him?" Hugh asked her.

She drew her wrap around her shoulders more closely and answered a little absently, as if to some self-inquisition rather than to a question of another:

"I have never seen a face that impressed me more with its strength and power. I should not like to be either the man or the mob to cross the will of Mr. Tunstall."

"That's a good portrait, and you are a good reader of faces, Miss Margaret," Sid testified.

VII

THE HEAD AND THE WALL

THE rain soon passed, and the party drove to the Garrards' for dinner. Hugh Letcher and Kate Cockerill were dropped here, but Sid, who was to go on to Letcher Tavern for Florence, turned to Margaret Helm on the front seat beside him.

"It is just the time of day for a delightful drive," he said; "do you know of any reason why I should have this one all to myself?"

"None in the world," she smiled, "unless Kate has some other use for me."

Mrs. Cockerill, thus appealed to, ordered Margaret to keep her seat, and Sid drove off with a triumphant stir in his blood. It was rare that he could find an opportunity to be alone with Margaret, and it was rarer that she so readily acquiesced in it.

He vigorously shook up the horses, as if to quicken them to the new momentum pulsing into the hands that held the reins, but he soon

pulled up to a lazy jog. The road to Letcher Tavern was all too short, and he wished to make the most of it.

There were other reasons why one, even if he did not have Margaret Helm beside him, should not hasten over that bit of road. The limestone macadam, washed clean by the rain, was as smooth as asphalt. The foliage of the trees, bushes, and vines that lined it was glistening wet and sighed fitfully the ecstasy of its rejuvenation, and there were new notes in the throats of birds that might have been caught from this ecstasy of the leaves. The sun was sinking in a marvellously clarified sky of blue and green, without a dash of other color to blur its brilliant purity. There was an answering purity in the cooled air, which was charged, besides, with the insidious and tonic odors of drenched woods and fields.

At a certain point on that stretch of road a great wild-grape vine sprawls up by the bole of a tall ash and weaves a wide arch across the pike into the branches of the trees on the other side. It was just here, Sid Garrard always remembers when he sees this arch, that Margaret Helm turned to him with a thrillingly sweet and radiant face which he was never

to forget. It appeared to have bloomed, like the scene around them, out of the storm, — the freshness of its coloring, the wet scarlet of the lips, the rain-swept sky-light of the eyes, even the hair, coiling at the neck and massed heavily over the brow, seemingly darkened and dampened by the exhilarating humidity of the atmosphere. It was a face which told him that she had never before liked him as much as now.

"So you did make the amende to Uncle Minus," she smiled.

"Uncle Minus?" blankly. "Oh! about the balloon problem?"

"Yes."

"How did you know?" he laughed.

"He told me only this morning. I noticed that he had been sitting on the garden fence for a long time — it must have been at least an hour. His head was propped in his hands and he was so still that I might have believed him asleep if he had not twice got down and carefully made some curious lines on the ground with his toe. Finally I yielded to my curiosity and went out to him and asked him what was the matter.

"'Hit 's de same de matter whut 's been de matter ever sence Mr. Sid tole me 'bout dat

b'loon, Miss Marg'rit,' he said. 'I des tryin' to work out how high dat b'loon wuz when dat pistol went off — da' 's all.'

"I asked him if he was sure Mr. Sid himself could work out that, and he said:

"'I dunno 'bout dat. Maybe he kin en maybe he cain't. Mr. Sid, he come roun' yere t' other day en he 'lowed he wuz des foolin' when he give me dat sum, en he tole me 't wa' n't no use fer me to pester no furder 'bout it, caze he des made it up hisse'f to ketch me, en it cain't be worked out nohow. But I up en tole him to go 'long. Dah wuz de sum, en it boun' to have er answer. Dah wuz de b'loon, dah wuz de pistol fired off, dah wuz de bullit en de soun' hittin' de groun' at de same time — how high wuz de b'loon? Nobody cain't deny de b'loon wuz so high when de pistol went off: how high wuz she? Maybe Mr. Sid done fool hisse'f, but dey cain't nobody fool me 'bout sums. Ev'y sum, hit des bleedzed to have er answer, en dat b'loon, hit sholy is a sum, en I gwine work it out, don't keer whut Mr. Sid say, ef de good Lawd spar' me bref en strenk.'

"I'm afraid it is impossible to break him of the habit of trying to find out how high the balloon was," Margaret concluded.

"Yes," Sid agreed, laughing, for the second time, at her faithful imitation of Minus, "he thinks I builded bigger than I knew when I 'made up' that problem, and I only won his contempt when I tried to convince him it could not be solved."

They had now come out on the stretch of road that lay for a mile along the bank of the little river. To the left the level rays of the low sun lit rolling leagues of grassland, dotted by an occasional spreading tree, or cluster of trees, and marked by long lines of intersecting fences. Nearer and to the right the thick fringe of shrubbery that edged the river and hung over the water threw upon the stilled stream the first cool, brooding shadows of evening. Farther ahead the surface of the river widened in a sun-smitten sheet of silver, extending, it seemed, to the very windows of Letcher Tavern, which shone as if with the same brilliance. Sid Garrard had pulled the horses to a slow walk.

"But it would n't be safe," he said, turning his head and looking at her with sudden seriousness, "to credit me with any belated consideration for Uncle Minus in confessing the trick I had played him. I tried to undo that

trick simply because you disapproved of it. Do you remember, when you told the story, the evening of the day I first met you?"

She colored a little.

"Yes — that is, I remember I told the story."

"And I remember you did n't like my part in it. That was the most distinct impression it made on me, because, I suppose, from the very first I have wished to please you, not displease you. Perhaps because I so much wished to please you was one reason why I have done little but displease you."

She was rosy now, and as serious as he.

"No! no!" she protested with agitation. "That is not true! How could it be? I — I have not taken it on myself to be either pleased or displeased with what does not concern me."

"But everything I have done since I met you has concerned you — that is, in the sense that you have been the motive of everything I have done. You know — you must know — that from the day I first saw you I have thought only of you — only of how to —"

"Don't, please! You must not!" making a quick gesture that was at once imploring and imperative. "I do not wish to hear."

"Yes, I know. I am only displeasing you

again. But you are going away soon, and I must have it out, though I am perfectly aware there is no chance for me — yet."

"Why would you spoil everything?" she said sadly, a little petulantly. "I did so wish us to continue to be good friends!"

"Good friends! We have never been good friends. It was impossible, when I loved you so openly and madly from the first, and it will always be impossible because I can never forget my love for you long enough to compromise on friendship. I want your love, Margaret, nothing less. I know I cannot have it now, but —"

"Oh, love! love!" she interrupted passionately, her cheeks glowing, her eyes flashing. "I do not wish to hear the word. I will have nothing to do with it! I am so young yet, and there are so many other things that come before love. There is no man living that I would allow myself to love now!" Her lips were half parted as she finished speaking; she threw out both hands in a swift, outspreading motion, as her eyes looked out exultantly on the beautiful world before her and her nostrils drew in its exhilarating atmosphere.

"Ordinarily," Sid droned, "I'd say it would

be a poor sort of love if a girl could control it at will; but you, Margaret — well, you are not to be classed ordinarily, and I 'm not sure that anything is impossible with you now. Anyway, I shall wait with the rest until you have had the other things, and when the time comes I shall take my chance with the rest — if I can't get my way before."

She paid no attention to this. Her breathing was still full, her head still high, her eyes still victoriously penetrating the beautiful world beyond the track of the silvered river.

"When the time comes!" was Sid's thought as he shook up the horses. "The glory of that time to the man who comes with it! But one thing is certain — he will be a man, not a boy."

VIII

"A YOUNG FOOL"

ONE passing along that road on an afternoon about a week later might have inferred that some festivity was in progress at Letcher Tavern. At one point of the shaded lawn there was a group of a dozen garrulous and laughing young people, and scattered in various directions under the trees were several couples, less audible. Old Shelby Letcher, with his chair tilted against an oak, was delivering a monologue, emphasized by gestures with the pipe which he had taken temporarily from his mouth, and addressing his remarks especially to Sid Garrard, who maintained a listening attitude, but whose eyes sought the larger and noisier group in the babble of which the voice of Margaret Helm, though unusually soft and low, was easily distinguishable. Here and there were two or three negroes serving light refreshments.

But it was not a prearranged affair of any kind. It was the last day of Margaret Helm's

visit to Kentucky, and Margaret's friends, with the Letchers' friends, had simply come over, and out, and in, to say good-bye.

Sid Garrard, since he had "had it out" with Margaret a week before, had not again verged on sentimental or even personal ground. He knew that he could only lose by trying to force the issue further at present, and there was nothing for him to do but, as he would have expressed it, "give her her head." He had set himself to continue, as before, their usual friendly relations, and he had been consummately seconded by Margaret. Perhaps Kate Cockerill may have suspected the real situation, but beyond her surely there could have been no other — unless it was Florence Letcher. To venture an opinion on that point would hardly be profitable; for it is not given to a masculine mind to fathom the knowledge, intuitions, or suspicions existing between two girl intimates. Nevertheless Sid inwardly chafed that he had to spend so much of this last afternoon of Margaret's stay listening to Shelby Letcher's well-worn political dogmas, and that even could he escape these he could only be one of the score that were now making merry at Letcher Tavern.

The political dogmas were interrupted by the arrival of two men who drove up, and, leaving their buggy at the gate, walked with a business-like directness toward Shelby Letcher. One of these was John W. Driggs, familiarly and admiringly called "Jawn W." He was a well-made, ill-dressed fellow of fifty, with a shrewd, firm face, shaved except at the cleft between chin and lower lip, from which grew a pointed tuft of gray hair, above which his upper lip closed down in a clean, almost straight line, ending at the corners in two little dimples that gave an inconsistently cherubic and youthful touch to his countenance. "Jawn W." was the head of the Democratic County Committee and had long been the local party leader and boss. His companion was Squire Breckinridge Bodine, who, not being able to pass the ladies on the lawn without a great deal of bowing and beaming, and without stopping to bend low over Florence's hand, was a quarter of a minute behind Driggs in joining Shelby Letcher.

"Ain't that Jawn W. and Breck Bodine?" asked Mr. Letcher, swinging his pipe toward the two and cutting off a sentence invocative of the Resolutions of '98. "I wonder," raising

his voice that Driggs might not miss the words, "what skulduggery Jawn W. is up to now. I say, Sid, would you mind stepping around the house and unchaining old Rosin?"

Shelby Letcher was one of Driggs' greatest admirers, and it was his way of showing his admiration to profess to Driggs himself much contempt and respect for Driggs' powers of rascality.

Driggs came up, both dimples going, and was received with a vigorous hand by Mr. Letcher. As Squire Bodine followed, Mr. Letcher called to a negro who was passing with a tray.

"Bring that over here, Sam. What is it?"

"Lemonade, sir," the boy answered, as he approached.

"Lem — lemonade! Listen to that, gentlemen. Lemonade for Jawn W. and Breck Bodine! Sam, will you never learn any manners? Water the peonies with it and — "

He went over to Sam and gave him a few directions in a lowered voice; then turning to Driggs and Bodine again, as Sam hastened toward the house, said:

"Gentlemen, I hope you will excuse Sam. He's one of these new niggers, and what's

worse, was born over in Indiana, or Illinois somewhere, and you all know very well you can't expect a darkey raised across the Ohio River to have any real nigger breeding."

"Hah! don't give yourself any uneasiness, Mr. Letcher," Squire Bodine protested, fanning his hot face with his hat. "Everybody knows that no Letcher Tavern darkey ever makes a miscue among gentlemen; though I can't see that it was any particular fault of Sam's this time, as he was makin' for the ladies when you called him, and I have understood that ladies have a taste for lemonade."

"Well, Squire, whosever fault it was, I promise you it shall soon be remedied."

"In the mean time, Mr. Letcher," Driggs suggested, "is Hugh at home? We'd like particularly to have a few words with him this evenin', on the matter I mentioned to you in Yardley the other day."

"Why, yes, he's here somewheres or other. O Hugh! Sid, look around and find that young man, won't you?"

Sid found Hugh among those who had gathered about Margaret Helm, and sending him to his father, took the desirable seat near Margaret which Hugh vacated. There

was no opportunity, however, for such engrossment in Margaret's society that Sid did not see Driggs, Bodine, and Hugh walk off to a far corner of the grounds, where they sat down and engaged in a conversation that seemed principally conducted by Driggs. When Sam reappeared with a differently colored set of glasses on his tray, he was directed by Shelby Letcher to the far corner, and when he left the far corner he evidently took a request to Mr. Letcher which the old gentleman complied with by getting up and going over to the far corner himself. There was much more talk, Shelby Letcher now apparently leading; finally Driggs rose and shook Hugh's hand, after which he also shook Mr. Letcher's, a performance that was repeated immediately, though more effusively, by Squire Bodine. Sam was now again summoned, with another set of glasses; Shelby Letcher, holding a glass in one hand and his pipe in the other, made a short speech, after which a toast was drunk, clearly to Hugh Letcher, and the party, all smiling now, moved slowly across the lawn toward the gate.

As they were passing within a few yards of the group in which Sid Garrard was sitting, Squire Bodine, with an eye ever to the ladies,

lifted his hat from his head and, his broad face radiant with the situation in which he found himself, bowed impressively and proclaimed:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have the high honor to be the first to announce — er, ladies and gentlemen, I am most happy in being the first to enjoy the privilege and distinction of presenting to you our next Senator in the State Legislature, the Hon. Hugh Letcher."

This was received with exclamations of surprise and congratulation and with a round of hand-clapping which Squire Bodine at once took to himself as a tribute to his oratorical powers, responsive to which, bubbling over with satisfaction and reassurances of the truth of his announcement, he was the next instant in the thick of the crowd, grasping hands right and left, especially hands of the ladies.

Hugh, besieged for explanation, laughed, with a gesture toward Driggs, who, ill at ease in such company, was silently standing at some distance, by the side of Shelby Letcher.

Driggs was dumb, and Shelby Letcher undertook to amplify Squire Bodine's announcement.

"This is all there is to it, my friends," he said, extending his pipe out over his auditors.

"Our worthy fellow citizen, Squire Bodine, is, I am afraid, a little precipitate. Hugh is not elected yet — he is not even nominated, but the — er — the executive heads of the party, through their chief and representative, Jawn W. Driggs, Chairman of the Luttroll County Democratic Committee, have expressed a desire that my son consent to become a candidate before the convention for the nomination, with kindly personal assurances from Mr. Driggs that the young man will enlist such influential interests in his support that his chances for nomination by the convention are — er — very promising, very promising indeed."

"Very promising?" swelled Squire Bodine, straightening up from a bow he had been making over Margaret Helm and, in his resentment of the attempted qualification of his own words, forgetting to release her hand. "Lookahere, Mr. Letcher, you know as well as anybody that Hugh is done as good as elected — that Jawn W. Driggs is for him, first, last, and all the time, and that when Jawn W. Driggs says, 'Stick!' the convention says, 'Stuck!' and that a nomination means an election, hands down. Ladies and gentlemen, *that*'s all there

is to it, and the Hon. Shelby Letcher knows it, the Hon. Hugh Letcher knows it, and the Hon. Jawn W. Driggs knows it better 'n anybody."

Again expressions of gratification and congratulation were addressed to the future State Senator, and Sid was standing near Margaret when, as Hugh approached, she impulsively stretched out her hand to him.

"I am so glad!" she exclaimed radiantly. "I know you will make a splendid record, and we shall all be proud of you."

"*I*'d go to the penitentiary, if necessary, Hugh, instead of to the Legislature," Sid laughed, "to have such things as that said to me. And by the way," with a sudden seriousness, "why can't I go to the Legislature with you? I've been with you in most of your record-making heretofore. I say, Mr. Driggs," the laughter again in his voice, as he turned abruptly to the county chairman, "Hugh and I are usually partners in iniquity. Can't you send me with him to Frankfort?"

"To the Legislature?" asked Driggs, somewhat at a loss how to take this sally of Sid's.

"Yes, sir; to the Legislature."

Nearly every one was laughing now. The joke seemed a good one. "Listen to Sid!"

cried out Nixon. "He 's actually putting himself in the hands of his friends for the Legislature! He 'll be coming out for Governor soon!"

"I 'd like to suppote you, Sid," responded Driggs, "but I 'm afraid you 're a little too late."

"Hugh goes to the Senate," Sid persisted, "but you 've still got the place in the House, have n't you?"

"Well, you know, Lanagin has been promised — well, you know, he 's been a candidate for the place for several weeks, and I expect he 's got it nailed down pretty tight by this time. In fact, Mr. Garrard, I keep toler'bly well posted on the politics of the county, and I 'm dead sho that Lanagin already has a majority of the delegates to the convention."

"Why, the delegates have not been selected yet."

"That don't make no difference, Mr. Garrard. The — the people are done committed to Lanagin, and the delegates are bound to be selected accordin'ly."

"Oh, come off, Sid!" Squire Bodine put in, "you know as well as anybody that Jawn W. Driggs is promised for Lanagin, and that when

Jawn W. Driggs says, 'Stick!' the convention says, 'Stuck!'"

"Officially," qualified Driggs, "I'm not for nobody, but personally I was long ago committed to Lanagin. If you had spoke to me earlier, it might have been different."

The joke still seemed to be considered a good one. "I do believe Sid's in earnest!" roared Nixon. Sid glanced around at the merry faces. They were laughing at the very thought of his broaching the idea of becoming a candidate for the Legislature. But Margaret Helm was not laughing. She was looking from him to Driggs with wonder and perplexity. Kate Cockerill was not laughing. Her face was flushed in resentment of the laughter, and her eyes were fixed on Sid with a touch of solicitude in their tender depths. Sid flushed a little himself, and his jaws hardened. He turned again to Driggs.

"So you think there would be no chance for me in your convention, Mr. Driggs?"

"Well, you know everybody has a right to go before the convention that wants to, Mr. Garrard; but what would be the use? I'm givin' it to you as a friend that it is my honest personal opinion that no man in the county would have a chance now against Lanagin."

"All right," Sid announced with quiet resolution; "then I'll see what I can do against Lanagin before the people instead of before the convention."

"By George, he *is* in earnest!" gurgled Nixon.

"You don't mean to say you 'll run independent?" replied Driggs in amazement.

"I suppose that 's what you call it," Sid answered, moving away.

"It 's — it 's everlastin' suicide, Sid!" gasped Squire Bodine.

"Sid, you 're a young fool!" pronounced Shelby Letcher, with unaffected asperity.

Sid was smiling again now. "Well," he replied, "this is my first appearance in politics you know — "

"And it 'll be yo' last, my boy," interjected Squire Bodine.

"And I 'm doing the best I know how," Sid continued; "and as my first speech, ladies and gentlemen, I ask everybody to vote for me who is not committed to somebody else."

"There 's one thing sure, Sid," Nixon bellowed, "you 'd win, in spite of all the Lanagins and the Driggses, if the girls of the county could vote."

IX

THE ISSUE JOINED

WHEN about four years later Sidney Garrard announced his candidacy for Congress, there were few voters in Luttroll County who did not recall and recount, with some personal reminiscence, his first race for the Legislature and the altogether surprising manner in which he "slipped up" on John W. Driggs and his man Lanagin. Not many of the Luttroll voters had taken that race any more seriously than Nixon had done at the moment when Sid had so suddenly declared his intention to become a candidate. It had been looked upon as a "joke" by the county generally, as it had been looked upon by most of those who heard his declaration on that afternoon at Letcher Tavern. People laughed good-humoredly in his face wherever he went in his canvass of the district, but many of those who laughed voted for him on election day, because of some special reason: because he was the friend of the voter;

because he was "a clever chap" and "a good fellow;" because their votes could not affect the result, anyway; because, even in a joke, they liked the spunk of a man who would "buck" against John W. Driggs and his machine. Sid Garrard was simply rated as Sid Garrard, happy-go-lucky, "one of the boys" even younger than his years, hail fellow with horses and dogs, but fonder of pretty girls than he was even of horses and dogs, "popular" among all classes of men, with whom he was ever ready to give and take a story or a prank. His candidacy for the Legislature was considered only as one of his pranks. It was not taken seriously because Sid himself had not been known to take anything seriously.

But notwithstanding that Sid knew nearly every voter in the county and made personal overtures for his support, and notwithstanding that he received so many votes for the reasons already indicated, he could not have been elected if Driggs and the machine, like the rest of the county, had not also laughed in his face and regarded his candidacy a joke. Lanagin, once nominated, was, as a matter of course, "as good as elected." Certainly John W. Driggs did not think it necessary to make any

particular effort to defeat such an opponent as Sid Garrard.

When the count of the ballots showed that Sid had been actually elected by a scant majority, it was considered a bigger joke than ever. People laughed in his face more heartily than before. But Driggs did not laugh. No one in Luttroll County believed that Driggs ever afterward thought it a laughing matter, or ever entirely recovered from the blow which his pride and prestige suffered in Lanagin's inexcusable defeat.

Before Sid had served out his first term, however, people quit laughing at him, either in his face or behind his back. He put the same energy and enthusiasm into his work at Frankfort that he had put into his play at home. He made such a record as a progressive, fearless, and clean member of the House that he had little opposition for re-election, which he secured after easily beating Lanagin for the nomination in convention, thus returning to the Legislature with unimpeachable credentials of "regularity," indispensable in winning his hard fight for the Speakership.

The value of his service as Speaker of the House of Representatives was disputed. The

"thick-and-thin" element of his party, "the fossils," the "old guard," "the machine," the "Bourbons," the men who believed, like Shelby Letcher, that the worst Democrat was better than the best Republican, and yet who could not have given a more intelligent reason why they were Democrats than that "the Democrats are our people" — these and their representatives in the House were not pleased with Sidney Garrard's record as Speaker. On the contrary, there were times when they were astounded and outraged by his failure to do what any "good party man" would have done as a matter of course. He was too unreliable, too prone to "fly the coop" when his party needed to count most on his blind loyalty. He could not be depended on to rule in the interest of his party, even on essentially partisan measures, when such a ruling was all that was requisite to put these measures through. Even when in the last days of the session the celebrated Redistricting Bill, well known to have been prepared under the supervision of Morgan Tunstall himself, the shrewdest party leader in the State, was rushed through the Senate and could as easily have been rushed through the House but for Garrard's obstinacy in refusing

to make a new ruling against the rights of the minority, he persisted in his obstinacy, notwithstanding the fierce denunciations of his "treachery" which his course provoked, and was thus responsible for the failure of the bill which was conceded to embody the ablest scheme of gerrymandering the State yet devised, and which, everybody knew, would unquestionably have prevented the possibility of an opposition majority in the Legislature.

On the other hand, his course in the Speaker's chair won him many friends among those Kentuckians whose party affiliation was influenced by something more than association and prejudice, bigotry or lack of real conviction, upon whom the ties of mere party regularity were becoming loose, and who were beginning to cast their votes, despite the contempt of the "party liners," as the involved issue, rather than the party name and the party hacks, dictated. These Kentuckians were even then making themselves felt, however slightly, and since then they have so increased and have so asserted themselves that Kentucky cannot always be counted on with certainty by either of the old political parties with their appeals to petty passions and inherited ignorance, and

with their inspiring aims to put the "ins" out and the "outs" into offices whose salaries, small though they may be, are much greater than most of the incumbents earn or expect to earn elsewhere.

Sidney Garrard's refusal to consider the Speakership as first of all a party appendage and instrument had brought upon him such criticism and aspersion from those of the "regulars" who have no claims upon any party except regularity that his term in the Legislature no sooner expired than, with his spirit of resentment and belligerency aroused, he defiantly announced his purpose to seek an election to Congress.

Within twenty-four hours after the publication of this announcement Sidney Garrard, riding by Tunstall Paddocks, was hailed by Morgan Tunstall and urged to stop and smoke a cigar with him.

"I wish particularly to have a talk with you, Sid, and I was going to hunt you up to-day for that purpose."

Tunstall had spent more and more of his time in recent years at his country place, which, indeed, he now made his home, and though it was April, earlier by two months than he usu-

ally appeared there, Garrard was not surprised to see him. Garrard had been long enough "in politics" to be proof against surprise at any of Tunstall's appearances or disappearances.

The two sat on the porch just where, Garrard remembered, Margaret Helm had sat four years before as she listened to Hugh Letcher's story of Tunstall. Garrard was thinking more of how Margaret Helm looked as she sat there than he was speculating about Tunstall's object in seeking this interview.

Tunstall was not long in coming to the point.

"Sid," he said, in his straightforward way, "I have brought you here to ask you to reconsider your intention to run for Congress."

Garrard turned his eyes upon Tunstall with an expression of curiosity.

"The fact is, Sid, I am going to run myself, and both of us can't be elected."

Garrard's short laugh was boyish and frank.

"I've never counted on not having strong opposition, Mr. Tunstall," he replied.

"I expect to win, Sid. I've never gone in for office before, and I can't afford to lose now."

"So far as you are personally concerned, Mr. Tunstall, I should hate to see you lose, but it

seems to me that personal considerations enter very little into the matter."

"There 's where you are mistaken. You have been provoked into making this race because you want a personal vindication of your course as Speaker. I don't mean to say that you have not the highest conception of a Congressman's duty and the highest purpose to do that duty. As for me, I confess candidly that I am influenced by personal considerations entirely in this instance. I have mapped out a plan for the employment of my personal energies for eight or ten years, and a term in the next Congress is the first step in that plan."

"If you insist on emphasizing the personal side of my case," Garrard said reflectively, "it seems to me you make it imperative that I fight it out to the end — and all the more imperative if you are to be my opponent."

"I see. I thought you would say something like that. It is in keeping with the fine and quixotic ideas with which you have entered politics. It sounds manly. It is manly. You can make a stirring and eloquent campaign with it. But you have no chance to win with it, Sid; and if you lose under such circumstances it will be almost impossible for you to

make another start. And you are too young to end your political career before it is fairly begun."

"I may have no chance to win, as you say, Mr. Tunstall; but certainly I can have no chance if I do not take one, however hopeless it may seem. What you say about practical expediency may be true, and I may end my political career by continuing in this race, but, really, I have no desire for a political career on any other ideas than those which you call quixotic, and if I should withdraw now, under the — the existing conditions, I do not believe I could ever have enough self-respect again to try to make another start."

"I can assure you, Sid, that the 'chance' which you propose to take *is* hopeless. It is several years too soon for any man to make a winning race in Kentucky on the lines you expect to follow. The time may come when there will be enough voters in this State who do their own thinking to elect a Congressman, but that time is not yet. Don't deceive yourself that it is, because you have found that a great many of them approved your course in the Legislature. All those estimable people don't live in this Congressional district. You might

give me a good fight in Luttroll County, but there are a dozen other counties in the district in which your personal popularity won't count for so much. Those counties are all dominated by the old school of politics. They are Democratic to-day for no better reason than that they were Democratic twenty-five or thirty years ago, and that it has never been considered good form since the war to be anything but Democratic. They are Democratic for no better reason than the mountain counties could give for being Republican. Their political duties make but little demand on them. They allow the wire-pullers to control their primaries and conventions, and they religiously 'vote the ticket' which the wire-pullers name. That is why it will be easy for me to beat you, Sid."

"Then it is not particularly material to you whether I withdraw or not," Garrard laughed.

"People who don't know me as well as you do might infer that I was making a clumsy argument in my own behalf. I want you to withdraw for two reasons. One is that it would save me considerable work in organizing the district; the other is that it would save you a needless defeat. It is not necessary for me to tell you that I have liked you ever since you

were a young boy, and I wish to see you succeed — where you do not insist on crossing my own path. Perhaps it will be news to you that, though I have called you quixotic, and though you obstructed some of my plans, your conduct in the Legislature had no greater admirer than I. It was splendid, though it was premature. When the new order of things comes in Kentucky your day may come with it, unless you rashly sacrifice yourself to prematureness. Don't do it. Wait a little. Your day could not come yet, even if mine were not at hand, but when it does come it will be a better day than mine. If I were your age I might choose the road you have chosen, but as it is I must reach my ends by the road which I know, and which, as yet, is the only road to those ends. You are thirty; I shall be fifty before you are thirty-five. It will be an advantage to you to wait; I cannot afford to wait. As yet the old order of things obtains in Kentucky. That is for me, not for you. You and your followers call me a boss of the machine. Well, political parties in this State are to-day merely soulless machines, and move aimlessly — except to antagonize each other — only as they are moved by those who understand how to

operate machines. The Democratic machine is the bigger, and I think I have now got to a position where I can reach and hold the throttle-valve. Why throw yourself in front of the engine? If I were not so sure of the result, and if I did not have a real regard for you, I should prefer that you remain on the track. It was you who made the issue with the machine in the Legislature; if there is to be a continuance of that issue it would signalize the supremacy of the machine if the representative of the opposition it is to crush should be you."

Tunstall relighted his cigar, and Garrard, who had been thoughtfully watching the smoke-rings from his own lips, turned his eyes upon his companion and replied:

"I think I understand you, Mr. Tunstall, and I am grateful, honestly, for your consideration for me; but I can't see the question of expediency as you do, and I can't do otherwise than make the best fight I know how."

"All right, Sid," Tunstall answered with a tone of finality. "I felt almost sure this would be your decision, and I 'm genuinely sorry that it is; for there is no one in the district I should not prefer to fight."

Garrard extended his hand impulsively.

"Thank you, Mr. Tunstall," he said; "it would be a great thing if we could fight on the same side some time."

"On your side?" smiled Tunstall, as he grasped the other's hand.

Garrard laughed confession.

"Perhaps, Sid; but at present it would be a losing fight; and, unlike you, I cannot find glory in defeat."

The two sat long after that, talking of other things; and when Garrard finally left, Tunstall watched him ride away and smoked another cigar meditatively.

Tunstall had been insincere in nothing he had said to Garrard. Considering the disparity of their ages, the two were good friends. The older man, especially, was fond of the younger, what appealed to him most in Sidney Garrard being the very qualities lacking in himself — youthful enthusiasm, optimism, and the impolitic audacity with which the untried Speaker had refused to obey the mandates of the party organization when he believed them wrong, even though he owed his election to the Speakership to that organization. Tunstall knew that the most effective way to confirm his own power in this organization was to administer a

decisive defeat to the man who had refused to use his office — received from the party — to further the enactment of the party's chief strategic measure. He was sure that it would be easy to administer such a defeat; yet he preferred, such was his liking for Garrard, that he should stand aside and not invite this chastisement. Some time, when the spirit of independence was less aggressive in Garrard and stronger in the party, there might be a future for him, but there was small promise of a future if he insisted on making an issue now of his independence.

Tunstall, though like most politicians of his type he would do many things in politics that he would not think of doing outside of politics, was neither dishonest nor corrupt. He had taken up politics as divertisement. He liked activity and power. He believed in himself, his own integrity and ability, more than he believed in the leaders or even the rank and file of political parties. When he entered the "game" he did not insist on introducing a new deck of cards of his own invention. He played it with the cards at hand. He saw that one party was all-powerful in the State, and he set himself to make that party his instrument.

Heretofore he had been satisfied with winning, with putting into office men of his own selection. But he had finally reached a point where this palled on him. He wanted a new and wider scope for his energies. He could not find it in doing the same thing over and over in the State. His eyes turned to the National stage of action. He saw there a vast stage, indeed, poorly filled by figures most of whom he knew to be much smaller than himself, blind to their opportunities for statesmanship and impotent to seize them if they could have seen them. When Sidney Garrard was elected Speaker of the lower house of the Legislature Tunstall had determined that he would go to the United States Senate, and that the next election for United States Senator, four years ahead, should give him his credentials. His first step was the Redistricting Bill, by which the Legislature was to be made sure for his party against any possible encroachment. That had unexpectedly failed through Garrard's obstinacy, but the failure was of little real consequence. It would be almost impossible, even under the existing apportionment, for the Democrats to lose control of the Legislature. The work before Tunstall was to maintain his

party leadership and to lend a vigilant scrutiny to the selection of the Democratic majority in the new Legislature. In the mean time he would add to his prestige and begin his public life with a term in the lower branch of Congress. If Sidney Garrard persisted in getting in Tunstall's way here also, the result could only add further to Tunstall's prestige. Nevertheless, he was sorry for Garrard, and would have been pleased if he had been prudent enough to retire from the field.

X

A WINNING AND LOSING SPEECH

GARRARD had not seen Margaret Helm since her visit to Florence Letcher, nearly four years before. He had made it convenient to pass through Virginia, a few months after Margaret's departure from Kentucky, and he had left the train at the little town in which she lived, but when he called at her home he learned that she was at the death-bed of Elsie Russell, and he continued his journey without any further effort to see Margaret. He knew, from an occasional remark of Margaret herself and from the less reserved testimony of Florence Letcher, that there was no one to whom Margaret was so devoted as to Elsie Russell, and he felt that even to recall his existence to Margaret then would be an inconsiderate intrusion. Shortly after Elsie's death, Margaret, in her grief, had gone abroad, where she had remained for over three years. It was only this spring that she had returned, and Garrard was planning to

repeat his journey through Virginia when Florence Letcher revitalized the world by telling him that Margaret was coming to Kentucky soon for another visit.

She came before Garrard, as he had understood Florence, had expected. He had been making a ten days' speaking tour of some of the adjoining counties, and he had returned just in time to fill his appointment at Plover. The crowd had already assembled around the wooden stand, erected in the grove in front of the little church. He was in excellent spirits as he rode up. His ten days' trip had been most encouraging. He knew that he had made votes and gained ground that Tunstall would have never thought of conceding him. He and Blitzen were fresh from an inspiriting canter of a dozen miles in the breeze-stirred, perfume-breathing May morning, along spongy dirt roads and smooth turnpikes. Leaving Blitzen and pausing only to speak to Kate Cockerill, who, with some friends, was seated in a surrey on the outskirts of the crowd, Garrard sprang upon the improvised platform, greeted by hand-claps, cheers, and familiar personal invocations. Several of the party leaders had seats on the stand, prominent among them being John W.

Driggs, Squire Bodine, and Shelby Letcher, who assumed these positions because it was a Democratic speaking — Garrard having announced his candidacy "subject to the action of the Democratic party" — and not because they were committed to the support of the speaker. Indeed, it was doubted that any one of this trio would "come out" for Garrard. John W. Driggs certainly would not, unless Garrard could demonstrate that his chance was better to win than Tunstall's; Squire Bodine would follow Driggs; while it was known that Shelby Letcher had never been able to understand how one to whom he had so fondly expounded the doctrines of "Democracy unterrified and undefiled" had wandered astray as Sidney Garrard had wandered as Speaker of the House. Indeed, Shelby Letcher was heard to address the young man occasionally now as "Mr. Garrard" instead of "Sid."

The audience was one to stimulate Garrard to his best. It was made up of people who had known him all his life, who had liked him and laughed at him, but who now, having seen that there was more in him than they had merely liked or laughed at, were disposed to consider him more seriously. There were some

who had begun to take a pride in him, as "a Luttroll County boy," because of his growing reputation, although not all of these could reconcile themselves to his occasional tendency to irreverence of party traditions and discipline.

He had been speaking for ten or fifteen minutes, and he could see that he was making a good impression. The young men in the andience were particularly responsive. A group of them, led by Nixon, was the centre of the applause. Dunk Peabody, who had climbed to the limb of a tree, was frantically waving his hat and his heels, and although the speech had in no way touched on Dunk's hobby, at every point well received by those below him he was jubilantly yelling out: "Tha' 's the ticket, Siddie! Give it to the plutycrats! Hit 'em ag'in!" There was a slight stir on the edge of the crowd as a carriage drew up, and another voice swallowed that of Dunk Peabody with a cry of "Hurrah for Tunstall!" The cry was repeated by several other robust throats, and looking in that direction, Garrard saw Morgan Tunstall's high English phaeton, and Tunstall, who held the reins, making a quick, imperious gesture that instantly quelled the noisy greeting of his partisans.

By Tunstall's side was Mrs. Letcher, and Garrard, following Tunstall's smiling glance as he turned to speak to some one on the rear seat, faltered in the middle of one of his strongest periods as he saw that Tunstall's answering smile was from Margaret Helm, who with Florence Letcher completed Tunstall's party.

For two seconds Garrard's heart seemed locked; his voice fluttered and his strong period died away incoherently and indistinctly. The argument that he was developing had snapped short and left him without a foothold; the train of thought that he was following had ended in an abrupt blank into which his words stumbled weakly and aimlessly. It was Dunk Peabody who seemed to save him from what some of his friends feared was a threatened and inexplicable "break-down."

"Thes you all wait tell he gits good an' ready," shouted Dunk; "then fare you well, Mr. Plutycrats!"

Garrard looked up at Dunk with a laugh, and then glancing again at Margaret Helm, met her eyes for the first time and was thrilled by what he thought he saw in them — an expression of bewilderment and of concern lest he acquit himself disappointingly.

But he had caught his mental balance now, and he proceeded with his speech consistently and with good effect. Indeed, after his momentary stumble, he seemed to have gathered himself together for a more vigorous effort, and his gain in fervor and force was so notable that a reporter for a Louisville paper, who had followed him on his round of appointments, wrote that "after he was fairly warmed up, his Plover speech was by odds the best that Mr. Garrard has yet delivered." If the reporter had understood the explanation he might have added, with characteristic flippancy and perspicacity — "thanks though it be to the presence among his auditors of one who could not even vote for him."

Determined as he was that a Luttroll County audience should not have cause to be ashamed of him, and bending all his energies to that end, Garrard yet had the practical speaker's facility for noting and apprehending incidental accompaniments of his speech's reception without deflecting or weakening the course of his thought. He realized that among the young men around Nixon who were making such demonstrations in his favor was the heartiest sympathy that he aroused, and that to such

as these he must look mainly for the success of the movement in which he had enlisted. He realized that among many of the older farmers there were admiration for him as a youngster they had always liked, admiration for his powers as a speaker, and only partial comprehension of the points he sought to press and sometimes even less acceptance of them. He realized that Dunk Peabody, on his perch in the tree, was becoming more and more mystified why the climax of pitching into the plutocrats was not reached, and more and more impatient that it should be reached. Most clearly of all he realized, every moment, the presence of Margaret Helm. Turn which way he would, the one face in the throng that he saw, or subconsciously felt, was hers, more beautiful than he had known it before, with the softer, deeper beauty that sorrow and four years of life had added to it. He knew that she listened to him and watched him attentively; that she was not disappointed in his speech; that once she and Kate Cockerill exchanged glances in which there was something very different from disappointment. (It was immediately after this that he rose to what the reporter described as "his finest flight of elo-

quence," which so excited Dunk Peabody that he lost his tree and in his fall crushed into a cockade that well-known and long-known landmark of the community, Hi Jaynes' Sunday "stove-pipe.") Moreover, long before he had finished his speech, he understood that Margaret Helm and Morgan Tunstall were on good terms, — very good, considering that they could have known each other hardly more than a week. Tunstall turned to Margaret frequently with a nod of approval or a word of comment on the speech. Garrard noticed that each quickly looked at the other, as they applauded, as for confirmation of a good opinion. It was after cumulative evidence of this that the orator launched into what some of his friends deprecated as a needlessly impolitic passage, noted by the reporter as "a savage onslaught on hide-bound Bourbonism, in which he boldly proclaimed that he pitched his campaign on the living issues of the present, and that he wanted the votes of no man because of the politics of that man's grandfather, or because that man wore either the blue or the gray, or was the son of a man who wore the blue or the gray, in a war that was fought and ended before he (Garrard) was born."

He concluded his speech very simply. "I have tried to present to you clearly," he said, "the grounds on which I ask this nomination for Congress. I have tried to explain to you distinctly why I am a Democrat and what I believe to be the best interests of the party and the country. If you will allow me to revise that phrase, I will say the best interests of the country and the party. With me the country shall always have precedence over any party. I am a Democrat, but before that I am an American; I am a Southerner, but above that I am an American; I am a Kentuckian, but some of my old friends here may call it treason when I say that were the choice forced on me, and I could not be both an American and a Kentuckian, then I should proudly be an American." ("I be Tom Walkered if he ain't gone back on States Rights!" growled Shelby Letcher to Squire Bodine.) "I have been told by those who wish to see me win this race that I am guilty of bad politics — that I am unnecessarily imprudent in declaring my views, in answering questions that are not asked me — but it seems to me that I have no right to your votes, nor could I wish them, without frankly revealing the grounds on which I seek

this nomination and election; and my one aim this afternoon has been to be unreservedly frank."

As Garrard finished and turned to leave the stand, Squire Bodine, who had risen, with the other distinguished occupants on the platform, held out his hand, as a matter of habit on such occasions.

"You made a good speech, Sid," he said; "about as good as could be made for your side of the case, I reckon: but I'm afraid you have n't made many votes by it."

"There 's one he 's lost," confessed Shelby Letcher, "and I 'm sorry of it. I 've been holding off till I heard this speech, Sidney, but I 'll have to come out for Tunstall now. I 'm too old a dog to learn new tricks."

"I 've never supposed you would not be for Tunstall, Mr. Letcher," Garrard said, as he helped the old gentleman down the rude steps of the stand. "I 'm sorry, too; but I 'll have to be satisfied with dividing the family with Tunstall. Hugh is for me."

"And I believe Florence is for you. Still it may yet be a tie between you and Tunstall over at the Tavern. There 's Margaret, you know," smiling drily; "I don't believe she 's

made up her mind between you two yet, but Tunstall has been carrying on a pretty strong campaign at the Tavern while you were out in the district."

Garrard felt his face burning in spite of himself.

"Tunstall's campaigns are always strong," he smiled back at the old fellow.

Others were crowding around Garrard to speak to him, and Nixon and his satellites were so demonstrative that Garrard could not see whether Tunstall's party, in whose direction he was trying to make his way, had yet driven off. Dunk Peabody also lounged up, his hands deep in his pockets, his countenance a ludicrous compromise between uncertainty and exultation.

"By Ned!" he drawled, "we did give 'em holy smoke, did n't we, Sid?"

"Never say die, Dunk!" shouted some one. "Maybe he 'll get to the plutycrats next time!"

Tunstall himself was now pressing Garrard's hand, and was saying, in the quiet, straightforward way which would have carried conviction of the speaker's sincerity even if Garrard had known him so poorly as to doubt it:

"It was a good speech, Sidney — the best this crowd has ever heard. In fact, it was so much too good for the most of us," a smile lighting his eyes, "that I think it will make as many votes for me as for you. But come with me. There are some friends of yours over here who are waiting to congratulate you."

"On making votes for you?" Garrard answered, laughing shortly, as he went with Tunstall toward the ladies. He felt that it was a small and ungracious spirit which his retort showed, but for the time he did not regret it. That was the spirit which Tunstall had aroused in him.

"I fear not," was Tunstall's reply. "You could never make too good a speech for that part of your audience."

Garrard, as he walked forward with Tunstall, did not try to shake off this petty spirit. There is a perverse satisfaction, akin to luxury, in the lapse, on certain provocations, of natures which are far from petty themselves into conscious and unashamed pettiness. In some such mood Garrard inwardly resented the part that Tunstall was playing this afternoon. The resentment began the instant he had seen Tunstall here with Margaret Helm. He resented the

fact that at his first sight of Margaret after these four years she should be in the company and under the protection of Tunstall. He resented the fact that it was to hear him speak that Tunstall had brought Margaret to Plover. He resented the footing of familiarity with Margaret on which Tunstall seemed to have placed himself. He resented the glances of sympathetic approbation that had passed between them as they listened to his speech. He resented the incident that it was even Tunstall who had sought him out in the crowd to take him to this first meeting with Margaret after so long a separation — a meeting under conditions very different from those he had looked forward to in his four years' dreams of it. He resented the thought that had come over him, against his will, as he saw Margaret and Tunstall together, that here were two people whom Nature, in lavish mood and unerring law, had fashioned for each other.

But he forgot his small resentments when he stood in Margaret Helm's presence once more. There was such sincere welcome in her eyes and in her voice as she spoke the few simple words of greeting, and, beyond that, he was so sensible of something, in her manner, in her

tone, which seemed to indicate a new and more respectful attitude toward him, that all trivial irritation was at once allayed. With Margaret Helm not only glad to see him but placing him on a plane of manhood which he had felt she had never quite conceded him in the old days, the moment was not one for harboring trivial irritations. For the time Garrard was no longer disturbed by the well-meant officiousness of Morgan Tunstall, or by the possibility of having so formidable a competitor as Tunstall in other fields than politics.

He was glad that Margaret barely referred to his speech, and then in a lightly conventional way. He knew that she liked it. He had watched her so closely while he was speaking that nothing she could have said here, in the presence of Tunstall and the Letchers, could have indicated to him more clearly the impression he had made upon her, which, as he had already interpreted it, intoxicated him with triumph, whether he was to win or lose the race he had entered. He would not have had her congratulate him here, even with the moderate effusiveness of Florence Letcher, to say nothing of the extravagant praise of Mrs. Letcher.

"I don't know anything about politics, Sidney," that lady exclaimed, "and I don't want to know; but I do know the speech was just grand, because — because it sounded grand, and because it made me cry and nobody noticed me do it because everybody was paying such close attention to you. Besides, Mr. Tunstall says he never heard a finer speech, and Mr. Tunstall knows all about such things; and Margaret — well, Margaret does n't know any more about politics than I do, but she says she understood every word — I asked her that point-blank — and what 's more, she says she does n't see how your speech can be answered, which is pretty hard, *I* think, on Mr. Tunstall."

"It can't be answered," Tunstall smiled, "and I shall not try. But fortunately for me, as I 've been telling Sidney, people are not sent to Congress from this district because they make unanswerable speeches."

Garrard, promising himself that the evening should find him at Letcher Tavern, mounted Blitzen and rode slowly homeward, ignoring for once the opportunity for electioneering offered by the unusual crowd in Plover. He had no spirit for such work to-day. He had

no thought of politics now. He saw only the lovely face that had dawned for him on the edge of the rough crowd he had addressed that afternoon, and his pulses were beating only to the new elation of Margaret Helm's return.

XI

THE PRELIMINARY HAND-CLASP

THE following month was far from satisfactory to Sidney Garrard. He could have devoted that month ardently to either his political canvass or to Margaret Helm. He tried to divide it between the two, and compromises were never to his liking. It was June again now, but a very different June from the one, four years before, which he had devoted, as much as she would let him, to Margaret Helm. He knew that he could not afford to allow his campaign to lag. His only chance of winning the nomination was in a thorough, vigorous effort to win it. The district was large; the convention was to be held in August: it was essential that he should make good use of June. But it was the hardest task he had yet set himself — riding over other counties while Margaret Helm was in Luttroll County, and only there until July.

"Kit," he said to Kate Cockerill one day,

with a return of his old boyish spirit, "I'll play you a game of Suppose."

"Suppose —" she assented, ever ready to enter into his humor.

"Suppose a man were in love with a woman — the right sort of woman."

"Yes."

"And suppose he were in love with — well, going to Congress."

"I think I might possibly make both suppositions," Kate smiled.

"Suppose she were where he could see her every day or two for a month, and suppose that he felt if he gave up that month to seeing her he might lose his chance for Congress."

"Well?"

"Suppose also that if he did n't give up that month to seeing her he felt that he might lose his chance for her."

"But would n't it be fair to suppose, if she were 'the right sort of woman,' that by thus throwing away his chance for Congress he might weaken rather than strengthen his chance for her?"

"You are taking the game away from me, Kit. I was going to ask you if such a supposition might not be in order."

"I think it would be — at least with one girl I know."

"Though it might please her, in a way that women can't help being pleased, if he threw away all other chances for the one chance for her?"

"Yes; but there is a possibility that it might disappoint her more than it would please her."

"Unless she knew that the man was absolutely sure he would lose her if he did not throw away his chance for Congress?"

"Well, perhaps. But that supposition is not permissible in this game, is it?"

"Kit, you are a woman in a million. You always agree with me perfectly! If — if others were more like you, there would be lots less trouble in the world for some people I know."

So Garrard kept most of his campaign appointments, changing some of them to regions nearer home, that he might run in and spend an hour or two at Letcher Tavern at least once a week.

It was a cruel course to hold himself to, especially as it was evident that Morgan Tunstall was not risking any of his chances for Margaret Helm by leaving her and travelling

over the district in pursuit of the nomination for Congress. Tunstall as yet had made no speeches. He had not proposed a speaking campaign. He relied upon other methods. True, he recognized the fact that a candidacy for Congress in Kentucky was essentially one that, from immemorial custom, implied a certain amount of oratory as a matter of course. He knew that it was no more questioned that a candidate for Congress would "take the stump" than it was doubted that, if successful, he would be expected to "take care of his friends." Tunstall was too good a politician to ignore this tradition and condition entirely. He intended to observe it to a sufficient degree to satisfy the proprieties. He had announced his purpose to make a few speeches throughout the district in July. But he was not relying on those speeches to secure him the nomination. Nor was he waiting till July to secure it. He had taken quick trips in May to the various county seats, and in June several of his lieutenants, of whom John W. Driggs was now one, had taken other trips over the district in his interest, to say nothing of the local leaders in different counties who, on special invitation, had paid Tunstall quiet

visits at Tunstall Paddocks. Garrard was not ignorant of the situation. Wherever he went he found Tunstall's "organization" strong. He discovered that a majority of the local "workers" and committeemen — the men who were to preside, with autocratic authority, at the opening of the primary conventions, and who would "organize" those conventions for the candidate of their choice, were already for Tunstall. Naturally cheerful though Garrard was, there was many a moment as he made his way over the district that hot and dusty June when he was sick at heart. He was fighting an opponent who not only seemed to have his victory won, but who was availing himself of the advantage which that gave him to remain at home and seek another victory, in comparison with which all other victories were nothing to Garrard.

For Garrard was sure that Tunstall intended to do what he could to win Margaret Helm. When a man loves he is ever ready to suspect that every other man loves the same woman; indeed, he never quite understands why every other man does not love her. He is sure that every man does who shows a partiality for her. And Tunstall had done much more than show a

partiality for Margaret Helm. Since Garrard had known him he had had little to do with women; certainly he had never seemed to care for one above another; nor had he given the least indication that he thought of marrying again. But it was evident to Garrard now that Tunstall intended to try to marry Margaret Helm. The extraordinary impression she had made on Tunstall; the change in the routine of his life; his open, assiduous proofs of his preference for her society; his attitude of respectful deference and intimate comradeship; his frank, quiet joy in the new conditions that had come into his life, were all noticed by Garrard, little as he had been at Letcher Tavern since Margaret's return. Moreover, Garrard was sure that there was something exceptional in Margaret's liking for Tunstall. Garrard had passed the period when he had feared no rival, and he felt that he could have no more dangerous rival for such a girl as Margaret than Morgan Tunstall. Curiously distinct and insistent now was his recollection of Margaret's manner and words four years before, as she had said, after looking at the portrait of Tunstall: "I have never seen a face that impressed me more with its strength and power. I should

not like to be either the man or the mob to cross the will of Mr. Tunstall."

Garrard was not mistaken. Tunstall, for the second time in his life and for the first time in his full maturity, loved. He had never thought that possible in all the years since the annulment of his marriage. He had gone his way, among men, killing time with his game of politics, in which the players were always men. Women had had no place in his personal relations or purposes. And yet Margaret Helm had suddenly taken such a dominant place in them as to work a complete revolution in his outlook, his desires, and, if not altogether in his plans, in their spirit. He had no thought of abandoning those plans. On the contrary, he would follow them out with a new zest. He would play his game now not for the mere love of playing, not solely for the exercise of power and the attainment of eminence for the better exercise of power, but for the exercise of power that Margaret Helm might the more respect him; for the winning of honors that Margaret Helm, as his wife, might be honored. If he had been successful before, with only the tokens of the game as stakes, he meant to be — he felt that he would be — in-

vincible with the inspiration of Margaret's pride and happiness to recreate him. It would still be something to demonstrate his power for the sake of demonstrating it, but it would be more to demonstrate it for Margaret's sake. It would be little enough, and yet the thought of it was a strange new elixir, to make Margaret the wife of a Senator, an Ambassador, perhaps — Why not? Kentucky will yet furnish other Presidents for the Republic.

Truly the fallow acres of Tunstall Paddocks, so long run wild to weeds and thickets, had not been more signally metamorphosed into upturned, fructifying fields by Tunstall's resumed management than had been the fallow soul of Tunstall himself by the influence of Margaret Helm.

Sidney Garrard postponed a speaking appointment in an adjoining county, in order to run down to Letcher Tavern the day before that set for Margaret's departure. Accompanied by Mrs. Letcher and Florence, Margaret was to leave for one of the Alleghany summer resorts where she was to remain until fall, and where Garrard expected to take a few weeks' rest after the meeting of the convention to nominate a candidate for Congress. But the

convention was more than a month in the future, and in the mean time he would have no other opportunity of seeing Margaret Helm. For once Garrard departed from his rule, and the yeomen of the Big Bend district in Grier County — "the Old Stamping Ground of the True Blue Democracy" — were notified through handbills and the county press that, owing to important changes in the plans of the Hon. Sidney Garrard, he would be unable to address them at Big Bend until the third Tuesday in July.

It was late in the afternoon when Garrard reached Letcher Tavern. Margaret and Florence, Shelby Letcher and Tunstall were on the lawn. Tunstall left almost immediately after Garrard joined the group.

"Walk with me to the gate, Sidney," he said, taking Garrard's arm, "and tell me the news from Grier County."

As the two went slowly toward the gate, Tunstall showed a disposition to impart rather than seek news.

"Better throw it up, Sidney," he said. "It is not your time yet. You won't have a delegate from Grier. You have a good chance to carry Trowbridge, Croxton, and Bascom counties,

and if you can carry this county and 'the Pocket,' you 'll be in the race. This county as yet is uncertain, but the Pocket is n't."

Garrard smiled. Tunstall was not so well informed as he thought. If Garrard was sure of one thing about the campaign, it was that the Pocket was opposed to Tunstall. But his smile faded as Tunstall went on:

"At present the Pocket does not like me. It may even stand solidly against me in the convention. But it won't be for you, Sidney."

"I think I have some chance there," Garrard replied modestly.

"None whatever. I believe you could beat me there; but has it never occurred to you that the Pocket's delegates might go to the convention committed to neither of us, but instructed for one of the Pocket's own favorite sons?"

Garrard threw a quick glance at Tunstall.

"No," he answered; "I have seen nothing to indicate that."

"But you are likely to see it at the proper time. Don't you think that such a man as, say Poindexter, could control every delegate from the Pocket?"

"I think it very probable; but Poindexter is not a candidate."

Tunstall looked straight at Garrard two seconds before speaking.

"He will be if I wish it."

"Ah!" Garrard responded with raised brows, after another two seconds. "I see."

"And with Poindexter holding the Pocket and you having Trowbridge, Croxton, Bascom, and even Grier and Luttroll counties, don't you see that the best you could hope for would be a deadlock?"

"Your reasoning is fair."

"And there would be only one way to break the deadlock. You could never throw your following to Poindexter against me, and you would n't do it if you could. I should not throw my following to you, because that would not be in the plan at all. The one outcome, you will agree, would be that ultimately Poindexter would break the deadlock by withdrawing and giving me enough of his votes to nominate me."

"Your reasoning is still fair," Garrard smiled.

"You see, from the first I have shown you my hand. Why foolishly try to beat it?"

"It is a strong hand, I admit; but the only way to beat it is to try."

"You are making a good fight, Sidney, and against any other opponent I should like to see you win. But I am pretty sure you can't, and I don't think you really believe you can. Better quit now and wait till another time."

"Thank you, Mr. Tunstall, but my mind is unalterable on that point."

"I have not hoped that it was n't. Well, I am sorry. I am downright sorry, Sidney. It will be a little more work for me, but I hate to see you make this mistake," smiling slightly.

"I understand you thoroughly," Garrard replied, with a touch of feeling. "I know you are actuated in what you have said principally by your friendship for me. I am duly grateful; but we hold very different views on this matter, and I must go on as I have begun."

They were now talking across the gate, Tunstall standing on the outer side.

"All right, Sidney. But it was not for this that I asked you to walk down here with me. We 've got up a little party to show Miss Helm Mammoth Cave, — Mrs. Letcher, your sister, and Miss Florence, Hugh, Nixon, and we are counting on you to be the other man. I should

have written or telegraphed you, but the excursion was only decided on yesterday and Mrs. Cockerill said you would be in to-day. We start to-morrow and expect to be back in three or four days. You 'll be one of us, won't you?"

"I thought Miss Helm was to leave for the mountains to-morrow," Garrard answered, not trying to conceal his surprise.

"She was; but we convinced her that she should not leave Kentucky without visiting the cave. Have you ever seen the cave?"

"Never."

"Then you can't afford to miss this trip. You could n't afford to miss it, any way, Sidney."

The two men looked silently across the gate into each other's eyes.

"Oh, to be his age," was Tunstall's thought, "with my life to live over and youth on my side."

Garrard was thinking of Margaret Helm's words four years before: "I should not like to be either the man or the mob to cross the will of Mr. Tunstall;" and thinking, further, that his own will and Tunstall's were inflexibly crossed not once, but twice.

"I will go," he finally replied; "I shall be glad to go."

They separated with a hand-clasp, each having a certain feeling that it was not very different from the ceremony with which two antagonists precede a duel to the death.

XII

A HORSE-BLOCK SYMPOSIUM

THE next day, Friday, Garrard left with Tunstall's party for Mammoth Cave. The preceding Sunday there had been some discussion, under the trees around the little Plover church, of a matter that was to complicate the uncertainty of Garrard's securing the vote of his home county in the convention, without which, as was well understood, he could have no chance of getting the nomination. Eight or ten men were loafing in the grove to gossip, as was their custom, before going into the church.

"Here he is," said one of the group, as a sleepy yellow horse, drawing an old buggy, appeared around the bend of the road. The horse was big, the buggy was low, and all of the driver, "Pap" Maxey, that was visible was a soft drab hat, perched cockily on one side, and beneath it a crinkly face, small, dancing eyes, in which the fountains of perpetual youth might have bubbled, and a sunken mouth,

whose thin lips, when not parted in the act of talking or laughing, were incessantly closed and working as if in the act of chewing—though chewing what, nobody had ever discovered.

"Do you reckon he's heerd of it?" asked one of the men in the church grove.

"Well, he won't say a thing when he does hear!" exclaimed another.

"Naw, he won't!" agreed Dunk Peabody. "He 'll lay over Uncle Jesse Craik when he's breakin' a colt er prayin' fer rain!"

Pap Maxey turned from the road and pulled up his horse.

"Howdy, boys, howdy!" he waved his hand in comprehensive response to the noisy salutations of the loungers.

The old man got out of the buggy with an agility that belied his apparent years. Dunk Peabody helped him take the horse from the shafts and hitched it to the rack, during which time every one was silent and Pap Maxey chewed. Then he joined the group under the trees.

"Well, boys," he said in a high voice, thin but merry, "what devil*ment* you scamps up to now? I don't never see Dunk Peabody

so polite an' Uncle Jesse Craik so pious 'thout knowin' the Old Harry's afoot somers aroun'."

"Oh, th' ain't nothin' ailin' of us, Pap Maxey," answered Uncle Jesse Craik, himself not much younger than the new-comer, for whom he made room on the horse-block. "Some folks mout say it was the Old Harry, an' some folks mout n't."

"'Nother toll-gate done fer las' night, Pap," Dunk Peabody volunteered for the crowd.

"I reckon so," assented Pap Maxey.

"Yeh."

"Which one this time?" chewing meditatively.

"Sibley's Mill," hastened two or three voices.

"Ag'in?"

"Finished the job this whirl, Pap: cut down the gate an' burnt down the house."

"How about Andy?" Andy was the gatekeeper.

"Andy, he got mulish, an' they shot the durn fool in the shoulder."

"He 's laid up at Sibley's, but Sibley says the doctor says he 'll pull th'ough ef blood p'ison don't set in."

"Yi, yi," was Pap Maxey's comment, after which he went on chewing.

"Ain't but one mo' gate in these diggin's now, Pap," somebody suggested.

"Tha''s all — Conway's," somebody else agreed.

"Yonder comes Nelse Tigert *now!*" another exclaimed.

"Yes, yonder comes Nelse Tigert *now!*" Pap Maxey repeated, with one of his cackling little laughs, as his small eyes played restlessly upon a tall muscular fellow of thirty-five or forty approaching with a stride whose freedom had a touch of swagger in it.

Two or three men had joined the party since Pap Maxey's arrival, without attracting any special attention; but it was as if Nelse Tigert's coming was an event, and had been awaited.

"Hello, folks! Why, howdy, Pap? What's the good word?" he called cheerily, throwing himself down on the grass.

"We was all thes talkin' about you," Pap Maxey answered — "anyhow, we was all thes thinkin' about you, Nelse. Toe-be-sho, we was only talkin' about the raidin' of the gate at Sibley's Mill."

Nelse joined in the laughter which followed this. "Was you there, Pap? Tell us all about it."

"Ef I had 'a' been, Nelse Tigert, they'd 'a' been mo' 'n Andy got shot."

"Andy's all right, Pap," Nelse assured him. "I thes come by Sibley's. Still somebody oughter be bucked fer shootin' the galoot; same time, Andy oughter be bucked fer bein' a galoot."

"Anybody," spoke up Dunk Peabody, "oughter have sense enough to know the people of this county have made up their minds to have free turnpikes, an' free turnpikes they're a-goin' to have."

This was received with a chorus of approval.

"It's a vanity an' a mockery fer any man to set hisself up ag'in the will o' the people," observed Uncle Jesse Craik.

"The will o' the people is all right when it *is* all right," responded Pap Maxey, pushing his hat to the back of his head, "but the will o' the people is like mighty nigh ev'ything else in this worl' — it's a in-an'-outer; an' it knows it. That's why the will o' the people sets up constitutions an' gover'ments an' laws to lay down things which the will o' the people shain't

do an' things which the will o' the people shill do. Yes, sir, the will o' the people, ef it is always right, goes to a powerful lot o' trouble to keep itself straight. You boys say the will o' the people has made up its mind to have free turnpikes. Now, free turnpikes is a mighty good thing to have, an' we oughter have 'em, ef we git 'em honis. An' I don't know no way to git 'em honis here but to buy 'em an' make 'em free. You pay fer yo' teams, ef you cain't git 'em on tick; you even pay fer yo' drams ef you cain't git 'em on treats. But you wanter blow up all creation ruther 'n pay fer yo' turnpikes. 'T ain't that you are all paupers. Some o' you don't pay no toll nohow — you go afoot ef you cain't git a lift. Dunk Peabody there, he ain't had hair ner hide of a critter sence he los' his las' mule on aces-up; yit Dunk is a-whoopin' loud as anybody fer the will o' the people an' free turnpikes. But 't ain't them that cain't raise no stake, like Dunk, that 's doin' all the devil*ment*. In some counties the gates in the richis neighborhood is the fus to go. Ef you want free turnpikes, why n't you buy an' pay fer 'em, from them that bought an' paid fer 'em, stiddier goin' after dark to rob an' shoot 'em free? Well, sir, the will o' the peo-

ple has made laws which be it enac's that when the will o' the people takes a notion to rob an' shoot, the jail is the right place fer the will o' the people; an' the jail is the place where ev'y gallivested scamp that raided that gate las' night oughter be — yes, sir-ree, the jail, an' not the church!"

Pap Maxey only seemed to amuse the crowd. "You ain't a fair witness, Pap," said one; "you would n't talk that-away if you did n't own stock in the turnpike."

"Yes, I own stock — I own five sheers. An' I did n't raid no toll-gates fer it, nuther. I worked fer it, like ev'ything else I got. I got my turnpike stock thes like I got my farm. I reckon when you boys burn me outn my turnpike property an' git yo' free turnpikes you 'll pitch in an' dynamite me offn my place, ef the will o' the people makes up its mind to have free farms."

"Say, Pap," he was informed by Dunk Peabody, "you 're away off! Farms is owned by privit individyuls, but turnpikes is owned by copperations; an' copperations an' m'nop'lies an' all them is gotter go."

"Yes, the turnpike is owned by a copperation," the old man admitted, "an' 'copperation'

is a powerful big word, ain't it? They was a man, one time, they was, who discovered that Nature won't allow no vacyum — you know that's a empty holler — an' I reckon Nature invented the word 'copperation' fer to fill up the empty hollers in the heads of some folks with. Toe-be-sho, 'copperation' is giner'lly what comes out when they opens their heads."

There was some chaffing of Dunk at this, but Pap Maxey, as one of his auditors expressed it, had "got his gait now," and did not pause.

"One of the fus things I learnt in the old blue-back spellin'-book," he continued, "was that copperations is a good thing fer the little fellers, like us. The old man with a raft of sons showed 'em how easy it was to break ev'y stick by itself, but they could n't break narry one when he tied 'em all together. We got up a copperation to build the turnpike because there wa' n't no privit individyul able er willin' to build it. We chipped in because that was the only way to git the road, an' we needed it, an' needed it bad. Befo' we built it there wa' n't a farm 'roun' here that sent hardly anything to market. It would n't pay to haul stuff forty mile th'ough the wilderness. Sence we built the pike it is easy to git ev'ything we raise to

the railroad — an' railroads is copperations that has done a heap mo' to bring out some States in this country than the States themselves has done — an' ev'y acre o' lan' in the county has doubled and thribbled in price, an' farmers not only makes a good livin', but has somethin' over to buy Sunday clothes, an' patent churns, an' melojuns, an' powder an' lead to shoot copperation toll-gate keepers with."

"Pap 's a-warmin' up now," sang out Nelse Tigert.

"One po' man, like me or you, ain't no great shakes by hisself, but ten, er fifty, er a hundud po' men clubs in an' makes somethin' mo' 'n tongue and buckle meet. That 's a copperation. Most of the stockholders in our turnpike is po' men; some is widders an' childun. Same way in mighty nigh all copperations. Yit you honis, hard-workin' privit individyuls wanter wipe out all their property, er gobble it up fer yo'selves. You let these here dummygogue politicians set you crazy. All a man 's gotter do is to take the stump an' shuck his coat an' loose his collar an' light into copperations, an' you wanter send him to Congriss."

"'Raw fer Garrard!" shouted Dunk Peabody.

"'Raw fer Tunstall!" countered Uncle Jesse Craik.

"You ain't never heerd Garrard dummy-goguin' ag'in copperations," Pap Maxey snapped.

"Well, you ain't never heerd Tunstall, nuther!" Dunk Peabody glared at Uncle Jesse Craik.

"You thes wait tell Tunstall takes the stump!" challenged Uncle Jesse, with slowly oscillating head.

"You boys shet up," ordered Pap Maxey "There was that 'ere nigger Gabe Fowler," taking up again the thread of his discourse, "he believed in the doctrine of free meat, an' because he carried it out an' stole a shoat from Alf Howlitt you sent Gabe to the penitentiary. But Alf Howlitt, he believes in the doctrine of free turnpikes, an' because he eggs you on to stealin' 'em you 're a-goin' to send him to the Legislature, where he promises an' pledges hisself to put in his time pulverizin' the turnpikes an' the railroads an' Wall Street and Lombud Street an' all them copperations. The way you fellers is a-goin' to pulverize the roads an' streets I reckon you mus' be cakilatin' on takin' to flyin' machines."

"Shanks's mare is good enough fer me," testified Dunk Peabody.

"Ef you cain't borry somebody's mule," qualified Uncle Jesse Craik.

"An' while you 're pulverizin' the copperations," Pap Maxey resumed, "what are you a-goin' to do with yo' churches? Ev'y man cain't have a church an' a preacher an' a orgin all to hisself, so you all go in cahoots an' chip in to put up a meetin'-house an' hire a preacher — some chippin' in blue chips an' some reds an' some thes whites, accordin' to the parable of the talents. So what 's yo' church yonder but a copperation? Well, I reckon ef the majority in heaven was to git possessed with yo' idees they would n't wanter let you in at all, because ev'y gallivested one of you did n't carry on a church by hisself as a privit individyul. When you goin' to blow up the Conway gate?"

The crowd was laughing in good humor, and some began moving toward the church door.

"'Raw fer Garrard and Howlitt!" called back Dunk Peabody.

"'Raw fer Tunstall and Howlitt!" promptly followed the falsetto of Uncle Jesse Craik.

"Come on in, Pap," Nelse Tigert suggested. "Maybe the parson 'll exchange pulpits with you."

"I s'pose you all are a-goin' to put the toll you saved this mornin' at Sibley's Mill into the conterrybution box!" was Pap Maxey's last word.

XIII

"THE QUEENIN' OF IT"

A LITTLE later he drove over to Sibley's to see the wounded Andy; and then coming back he went on down the road to the Conway gate. In those times of the turnpike marauders in Kentucky scarcely a week passed that the newspapers did not report gates cut down and toll-houses burned. The gate at Sibley's Mill had been destroyed twice now, and Pap Maxey knew that a few mornings before a scrawl, signed "The Friends of the People," had been found tacked to the door of the Conway toll-house, directing that no more toll be collected, on pain of being "blowed sky-high."

The Conway gate was the pride of its keeper, Nathan Conway. Forty years before, when the road was surveyed and a gate located near Nathan's cottage, he had applied for the post of keeper, and in accordance with his wishes the company had placed the gate in

front of Nathan's yard, on the edge of which it built the cabin used as the toll-house. Here it was the pleasure of Nathan to spend most of his time. He was an autocrat in his sphere, and, no less than others in higher spheres, he liked autocracy. Nothing in his narrow experience had ever given him such opportunity for self-assertion. A wave of his hand, and the traveller had permission to pass; a twist of his wrist, and the gate barred all transgression of his will. He was a stickler for the strict observance of the rules of the company, but it was a question if he was not secretly more pleased with their attempted infraction, for that gave him a chance to demonstrate his authority. His family — a wife and two children — understood and respected his hobby. His daughter, Lide, who kept the cottage obscured from the toll-house and the road behind roses, wistaria, and morning-glories, trained the vines also over the porch of the toll-house, and saw to it that there was ever within easy reach on that porch a cedar bucket of cold spring-water and a shining dipper, — a feature of "the Conway gate" which spread its fame from one end of the road to the other, and which more than anything else reconciled

Nathan Conway to the existence of the bicyclists. For the bicyclists not being required to pay toll, and not being therefore subject to Nathan's official authority, had been at first offensive innovations in his sight, and he had raised his voice, in political discussion with Dunk Peabody, Uncle Jesse Craik, and others of his fellow-countrymen, in favor of passing a law at Frankfort abolishing bicycles, along with the Money Power, trusts, and other evils of the age. But when the bicyclists discovered that bucket and dipper on the porch and revelled as only bicyclists can over such a discovery, and glorified his spring, and extolled his kindness, and stocked him with cigars and tobacco as tokens of their appreciation, Nathan's attitude toward them underwent a change, and eventually it pleased him almost as much to see the approach of a bicycle as it did to see a traveller try to evade or defy the rules of the company.

The few acres that he owned were cultivated by his young son, Dave, and these, with his official income, sufficed for his simple wants. This summer, after years of saving, he had got enough together to make his long-planned visit to his brother in Texas. Dave, as a rare

treat, had been allowed to accompany him as far as Louisville, and for the present Lide Conway was in full charge of the gate.

She came out of the cottage, this Sunday morning, through the toll-house, to the little porch, a wholesome-looking girl, clean as to the calico dress she wore, clean as to the white petticoat whose edge showed as she caught up her skirt crossing the yard. There were pink roses at her waist and under the rich tan of her cheeks, and the sun sifted down through the morning-glory vines shading the porch and sought its own in her eyes and hair.

"Good-mornin', Pap Maxey," she greeted the old man, who had pulled up the yellow horse in front of the toll-house. "I was goin' to send for you to-day. You must come in to dinner. Ma told me I must make you. We 're all by ourselves."

"Much obleeged, much obleeged, Lide, but I mus' be gittin' along. I thes drove by to see how you comin' on."

"Everything 's about as usual, only another warnin' was left last night."

"Toe-be-sho, toe-be-sho!"

She took from her bosom a paper and handed it to him.

"I found it on the do' this mornin', the same place where the other was."

He adjusted his spectacles and scanned it closely. "Ken you make it out?" he asked, returning it to her. "My schoolin' did n't pervide fer no sich gallivested writin' as that."

"It says: 'Last Warnin'. You are hereby notified not to collect no mo' toll, or the Conway gate will go to meet the one at Sibley's Mill. We warned you once — next time we will act. We do not act on Sunday which we remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, but we will be ready for business Monday. Take due notice. — *The Friends of the People.*'"

"Yi, yi!" Pap Maxey laughed, "an' the rapscallions means it."

"It 's a shame!" the girl said with kindling eyes. "Oh, I wish I was a man!"

"But you ain't, Lide, an' I 'll come over an' sleep in the toll-house to-night. They won't come to-night, though. That 's honis, what they say about Sunday. I know them scamps. But I reckon you an' yo' ma 'll feel easier with a man on the premises."

"I ain't afraid, but I know ma 'll be glad if you come."

"I 'll hunt up Vance" — Vance was the president of the turnpike company — "an' make him go befo' Judge Gilbert, at Yardley, to-morrer, an' swear out guards fer the gate. Then the Conway gate will be as ready fer business Monday as 'the Friends of the People' 'll be."

The next day, about noon, Pap Maxey, who had started to the railway station with the intention of going to Yardley, the county seat, to have Vance apply to the County Judge for guards, returned to the Conway gate, with the explanation that, owing to his horse's "gallivested laziness," he had missed the train, and there being no other until late in the afternoon, there would be little probability of his securing the guards before morning.

"But ef the raiders come to-night, Lide, you let 'em cut down the gate," he advised. "Don't you make no objection, an' they won't bother you ner the house."

"But why can't I have some guards without sendin' all the way to Judge Gilbert?" the girl suggested.

"So you mout, Lide, but not accordin' to the law made and pervided. An' the p'int is, you don't know who to git. You don't know

who b'longs to the raiders 'roun' here now an' who don't — specially who don't."

"I thought maybe it would n't make so mighty much difference, you know," Lide ventured, with a little more color, "whether they belonged to the raiders or not, if I asked them as a particular favor to me."

Pap Maxey's face wrinkled till his eyes shut with his shrill little laugh.

"Well, now, maybe it would n't," he admitted. "I had n't thought of that p'int. I reckon some folks would swim the river ef you ast 'em, Lide, raiders er no raiders. I mind me, now, there 's Ike Pritchett an' Rufe Wright, toe-be-sho."

"An' there 's Nelse Tigert," she added. "I reckon he 'd come."

"*An'* Nelse Tigert," agreed Pap, his eyes twinkling. "You git Ike an' Rufe an' Nelse to watch the gate fer you to-night, an' there won't be no raidin' of it, I 'll go you! An' all you gotter do is to crook yo' finger at them three, Lide, you raskil!" his laugh even causing the sleepy horse to prick up his ears.

"You go 'long with you, Pap Maxey!" Lide commanded, her eyes narrowing and her cheeks dimpling with the smile she only partially succeeded in repressing.

That afternoon she wrote three notes and sent them off by a negro boy. Ike Pritchett, Rufe Wright, and Nelse Tigert were regarded as the chattels of Lide Conway. They had all been "sparkin'" her for some time; Rufe and Nelse for three or four years and Ike more than half as long. It was generally agreed that Lide could get any one of the three whenever she "said the word;" that if she had made up her mind to "have" any of them, none of them knew it; and that she was holding all three "on the string," to suit her pleasure and convenience. They were all tractable subjects, except, perhaps, Nelse Tigert. Nelse had "asked" her as many times, no doubt, as either of the others had, and had been as devoted, but he was less patient with what he called Lide's "queenin' of it." He had even told her outright that she ought to make her choice of them or "boost the whole bunch." This being "bunched" impartially with the others was one of the things that seemed to chafe him. Rufe Wright did not disturb him much, except to get in his way. Rufe was a harmless sort of fellow, whom Nelse rather liked, and whom he did not seriously regard as his rival. Perhaps he did not seriously so regard

Ike Pritchett; but he had a contempt for Ike, and did not deem him worthy of so much as Lide's notice. He had too good an opinion of her to think that she would ever marry Ike Pritchett, but it "riled" him to see Ike admitted to her friendship and, apparently, to equal favor with Rufe Wright — and Nelse Tigert.

He was particularly displeased with Lide's latest bit of "queenin' of it." In the early part of the preceding week he had ridden up to the gate and asked Lide if he might "come to see" her Thursday night.

"Come Friday night or Wednesday night," she had said. "Ike 's comin' Thursday night."

"Seems like Ike an' me 's always wantin' the same nights," he had replied.

"An' you an' him are always put out with each other an' actin' disagreeable about it. So I 've turned over a new leaf. I 'm goin' to give you all one night a week apiece. Ike says he 'll take Thursday night, an' you can have yo' choice of the others. Rufe will be satisfied with any night."

"Well, I be dadbur — well, you do beat the Queen o' Sheby!" was Nelse's dazed comment, while Lide laughed softly in a "Giant

of Battles" rose into which she was dipping her face.

"Scuse *me!*" Nelse said, with his second breath. "I'm a thousan' times obleeged to you, but you c'n give my night to Ike Pritchett too." He swept the horizon with his hat as he bowed to her, and dug his heels into his horse's sides.

"Remember," Lide called to him as he galloped away, her laugh growing clearer in her intention that it should overtake him — "remember, any night but Thursday. An' telegraph me which one you decide on."

Lide's three notes were brief, and similar in everything except the addresses; Ike, Rufe, and Nelse each being merely informed that she would be at home that night, with the intimation that she would be pleased to see him.

"Did you find them all?" she asked the boy, on his return.

"Yassum."

"It was all right, was it?"

"Mr. Ike en Mr. Rufe say dey sholy gwine come, but Mr. Nelse, he say please scuse him, caze he done got an'er in-ingagemunt."

Such a thing had never happened before.

Rufe came at dusk, and Ike not much later.

Each seemed surprised to see the other, each having assumed himself especially favored by his invitation. Lide made no explanation for some time, sitting between the two and appearing not to notice their discomfort, though she was keenly and approvingly conscious of it.

Finally Rufe slowly rose and flapping his hat dejectedly against his thigh, remarked that he reckoned he 'd be movin' on.

Lide told him not to be in such a hurry, and then added that the raiders had made threats to destroy the gate, and that Pap Maxey had suggested that she ask Rufe and Ike to come over and help her take care of things that night.

Rufe's lassitude gave way to a look of pleased and childlike animation. He sat down immediately, and all constraint between him and Ike Pritchett at once vanished. They had something to think of now except the same girl. There was even before them a possibility of fighting; and Rufe and Ike were both more natural and rational and cheerful when fighting than when courting.

Soon Rufe took out his pistol and inspected it fondly; and Ike followed his example, remarking to Lide:

"Ef you'd a-told me afo'hand I'd 'a' brung my rifle along."

They were sitting on the little porch of the toll-house.

"You all take them pistols inside an' lay them on the table," Lide ordered. "There would n't be no accountin' for what you two would do, with them pistols in yo' pockets. I'll tell you when to use them, if the time comes."

There were strenuous, even indignant, protests against this, and her two subjects were nearer open rebellion than they had ever been before. But Lide had her way.

They sat and talked of the raiders and their doings until the moon came up through the trees, and the air from the yard grew sweet from the dew-distilled fragrance of Lide's flowers. It was nearly twelve o'clock when Rufe suggested that Lide go to the cottage and leave him and Ike to look after the gate.

"Hush," she answered intently. "I believe I hear horses."

She was not mistaken. In a few seconds the hoof-beats of several horses were faintly though distinctly audible down the turnpike.

Then the sound suddenly ceased.

"They've all pulled up," said Rufe, "er they've turned off to the side, where there ain't no rock."

"An' there ain't no dirt road along there, nuther," supplemented Ike; "mus' be ridin' on the grass to keep f'om makin' any noise."

For a little the silence was unbroken; then Rufe spoke:

"That's it! Don't you hear the chug! chug! of the horses on the grass?"

The moon was shining, though dimly, through a thin film of clouds.

"I see them!" exclaimed Lide, her eyes straining down the pale limestone line of the road.

About a hundred yards from the gate there was a clump of trees on one side of the pike, which was thus partially obscured at that point, but beyond, in the moonlight, a dark shadow was approaching; and a moment more it was merged in the larger shadow of the trees.

"They're goin' to hitch their horses there an' do the rest on foot," hazarded Rufe.

He seemed to have guessed right. It was not long before the raiders reappeared, now without their horses, and numbering apparently ten or fifteen. They came straight forward

until they had covered about half the distance between the trees and the gate, when they abruptly halted and drew together in a bunch.

"I reckon they see us now an' are holdin' a confab," observed Rufe.

It was fully a minute before it ended. Then a voice was heard to say decisively: "I 'll go myself an' see how the land lays, an' not a man comes another step till I give the word." Immediately one of the party left it and walked swiftly toward the gate.

"Why," gasped Rufe, in amazement, "that feller's voice sounded like — "

"It is! it is! Oh, the creature!" was Lide's low cry of wrath and contempt.

"The pistols!" Ike exclaimed, and he and Rufe rushed from the porch into the house to secure them.

But Nelse Tigert was too quick for them. He sprang forward, and before Lide knew what was his purpose he, laughing, had lifted her from the porch and was hurrying with her in his arms across the yard between the toll-house and the Conway cottage.

"That wa' n't no place fer you, Lide," he said.

"Oh, you coward!" and she, surprised and

powerless, could only strike him in the face with her hand.

"Do that ag'in," he threatened, "an' I'll kiss you."

Rufe and Ike had almost immediately run from the toll-house with drawn revolvers, but with Lide in the arms of the man they wished to shoot, revolvers were useless.

"I'll be back, boys, soon's I escote Miss Lide home," Nelse had laughed to them over his shoulder.

He put her down at the door of the cottage.

"You better go in an' stay with yo' ma," he advised; "I'll see that they ain't no damage done 'cept thes to chop down the gate pole."

Lide did not deign to answer him.

Rufe and Ike rushed up, and Nelse turned to face them.

"Hold on, you all," he said; "we don't want no difficulty in Miz Conway's yard. I reckon she's asleep, anyhow. You c'n see me outside, ef you wanter."

Just then there was the ring of axes at the toll-gate.

"You hurry back to the gate, Rufe," Ike urged; "I'll settle with Nelse Tigert."

"Stop, both of you!" Lide ordered, run-

ning up to her two lieutenants. "It 's too late to do any good now, an' there ain't no use of yo' gettin' hurt for nothin'."

Ike took a determined step toward Nelse, but Lide was between them, and was to be obeyed.

"Ike Pritchett," she cried, "if you an' Rufe Wright don't do exactly as I tell you, I 'll never speak to either of you again as long as I live!"

"She 's right, boys," Nelse Tigert volunteered. "No use yo' cuttin' up now. The gate 's down by this time, an' you got my word they shain't do no other damage. Ef you wanter light into us you c'n do it; but what 'll you make buckin' up ag'in' a crowd that 's six or seven to yo' one? As fer me, when you all wanter see me you know mighty well it 's always easy to find me."

He turned and walked away, toward the toll-gate. Ike, sullen and black, was about to follow, but was restrained by a look from Lide. Rufe was slowly gouging a hole in the turf with his boot, his eyes intent on his work.

"By gum!" he muttered, "I don't see what was the use o' yo' sendin' fer us ef you wa' n't a-goin' to let us have no fun."

The raiders had now left the gate and disappeared down the pike. When Lide, with her unhappy escorts, went to see what ruin had been wrought, she found that the toll-house had been undisturbed, but that the gate-pole had been cut down and had been obligingly chopped up into lengths suitable for stove-wood.

XIV

THE CONQUEST OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S SUPERIOR

ALTHOUGH it was not later than seven o'clock the next morning when Nelse Tigert rode up to the Conway gate, he found another pole across the road.

There was a smile on his face as he stopped his horse and waited for Lide to let him pass; the smile broadened as he noted that she came out of the toll-house without appearing even to see him, and that, contrary to her custom in taking toll, she made no motion to raise the pole until she had his money in her hand.

"Hear Pap Maxey has gone to Judge Gilbert fer guards," he said propitiatingly as he rode through.

She simply turned her stony face further away and lowered the pole behind him.

"That's a good move," he tried again, "ef he gits the right men; an' I reckon I better give him a tip."

She fastened the gate and walked back into the house, without any indication that she had seen or heard him.

When Pap Maxey returned to the Conway gate that afternoon, his eyes were dancing and his jaws were working so much more than normally that Lide knew, the instant she saw him, that he was highly pleased with the result of his journey to Yardley.

"Well, Lide," he said, "I reckon we 'll manage fer a while now. The judge did n't wanter give us no guards much — folks thinks he 'd like to take sides with the raiders hisself, bein' as he 's a candidate fer re-election — an' he would n't give us as many guards as we ast fer, but he allowed us fo' fer this gate an' Sibley's Mill together, an' long 's we got good men I reckon they 'll do. Nelse Tigert, he says they 're all right, an' Nelse knows."

"Nelse Tigert!" the girl protested. "Why, don't you know that it was Nelse Tigert that led the raiders last night?"

"I reckon I know as much about Nelse Tigert as the nex' man. When he says he 'll do a thing he 'll do it; an' he says he 'll be 'sponsible this gate won't be raided while he 's in charge."

"Nelse Tigert in charge of this gate!" astonished and indignant.

"Toe-be-sho! Ef he 's on our side now, who keers ef he was on t' other side las' night? So much the better ef he was — he knows the ropes. We done fixed it all up. We got Nelse 'p'inted one of the guards, an' he 's comin' here, while the other three 'll go to Sibley's Mill. Nelse said he reckoned you was not hankerin' fer his comp'ny, but you would n't hafter see much of him, an' he would n't be much wuss'n havin' strange guards hangin' 'roun'. Anyhow, we cakilated he could take keer of the gate best, without botherin' about any of the strangers; so he 'll be on hand to-night."

Lide's head was high in the air now, but she did not condescend to argue the point.

When Nelse arrived later and, standing his gun on the porch, against the wall of the toll-house, sat down on the steps near, Lide was at the cottage with her mother; nor did she appear until an hour afterward, when she came out to collect toll from some one. Nelse was still sitting on the steps, but she would not look at him.

"You neenter trouble about comin' to take

toll," he said, as she started back. "Ic'n thes as well 'ten' to that fer you as not."

"I despise you, Nelse Tigert!" she flung at him, as she walked away and returned to the cottage, which she did not leave again that night.

Next morning Nelse waited until he saw her standing in the doorway of the cottage, when he placed the money he had collected on the table in the toll-house and left for the day.

When he returned to take up his sentry again in the evening, she was sitting in the entrance of the toll-house, sewing. Nelse stood his gun against the wall, saw that she did not look up from her work, and went to his old seat on the steps. He sat there for several minutes, fanning himself with his hat, and then said, without glancing toward her:

"One reason I never come the other night, when you sent me that note, was because I knowed I could do you a heap mo' good by goin' with the raiders."

She gave no sign that she had heard him, and he spoke no further.

Soon she rose and went to the cottage for the night.

The following evening she was again sewing

in the doorway of the toll-house when he came on duty, and after he had been silently sitting on the steps for some time he said, as if in continuation of his words the evening before:

"I picked you up an' toted you to the house because I did n't know what minute them fools might begin carryin' on an' shootin'."

She made no reply. He went on fanning himself, and she went on sewing. Then, after a little, it being Thursday and Ike Pritchett's night, that young man arrived, and Lide took him over to the cottage.

Friday evening, as Nelse placed his gun against the wall, he looked into the doorway of the toll-house, as if he expected to see the girl sitting there again, but she was not visible.

Just then Dunk Peabody rode up, and Nelse went forward to take his toll.

"Say, you ain't goner charge me nothin', are you, Nelse Tigert?" Dunk expostulated.

Nelse answered that he had no authority to make any exception in Dunk's favor.

"But this ain't my mule, nohow," Dunk argued. "It's Uncle Jesse Craik's: charge it to Uncle Jesse."

Nelse insisted on the cash.

"Look-a-here, Nelse Tigert," Dunk de-

murred, as he handed over the money, "I be dodgasted ef you ain't the las' man I ever expected to see takin' sides with the grastin' plutycrats. An' I tell you, man to man, you better look sharp, too! The boys don't know what to make o' yo' desertin' 'em 'twixt sun-up an' sun-down, an' they got it in fer you!"

"You tell the boys," Nelse replied with unwonted dignity, "that bein' a privit citizen is one thing an' bein' a awficer of the law is another; an' as long as I *am* a awficer of the law, sent here by the Judge of the County Cote to carry out the law an' guard this gate, I 'm a-goin' to do it while Ic'n draw a bead er pull a trigger."

"Well, Nelse Tigert," Dunk called back as he rode on, "I bet you that 's the las' cent o' my money the Conway gate ever gits. You put that in yo' gun an' shoot it."

"Is Uncle Jesse goin' to lend you the toll as well as the mule?" Nelse retorted.

He did not see Lide until about nine o'clock that night. Then she came into the toll-house and set a tray on the table.

"Ma thought," she said in a low, uncompromising voice, "you might need a snack durin' the night."

"I — I 'm much obleeged to you," Nelse stammered; "I — " But she went out and across the yard to the cottage without waiting to hear what he would have added when he recovered control of his tongue.

Saturday night was the one Rufe Wright had chosen for his own; and Lide and he sat on the porch of the cottage, while Nelse sat on the porch of the toll-house.

Mrs. Conway brought him his lunch that night.

Lide brought it Sunday night; and before she could set it down and leave, Nelse had again spoken.

"You never s'posed I ever meant to harm *yo'* gate?" he said. "Them fools was thes determined to play the mischief an' burn down the whole toll-house, an' I dunno what all, but I thought ef I went with 'em I could take the lead an' hold 'em down from doin' anything but thes cuttin' down the pole, 'thout nobody bein' hurt. That 's all."

She did not answer, but adjusted the napkin over his lunch and went back to the cottage.

Monday night Nelse was a little later than usual, and it was dark when he reached the gate.

This time Lide Conway was standing out on

the porch of the toll-house, looking anxiously down the road. When she saw Nelse she gave a little exclamation of relief and hurried to meet him.

"O Nelse!" she cried, "look what I found stuck on the do' to-night."

She held out a sheet of paper and they went inside, to the lamp.

But Nelse, standing by the table, seemed to have no thought of the paper in his hand. His breathing was deep, his face aglow, his glad, puzzled eyes fixed helplessly on the metamorphosis of Lide.

"Read it, Nelse, quick!" she urged. "It — it is terrible!"

Nelse's face relaxed into a great smile, which seemed to settle there forever, and he finally found voice as he reluctantly withdrew his eyes from the girl to the paper.

"What? This here thing?" he said stupidly.

"Hurry, Nelse; read it!"

He unfolded the paper and held it to the light: —

"*To Nelse Tigert — Trater — You leave the Conway gate at once, or we will hang you to the rafters before we burn down the house.*

"*The Friends of the People.*"

Nelse laughed absently as he dropped the sheet on the table; but Lide caught his arm quickly.

"O Nelse," she pleaded, "leave right away, please! You don't know when they will come!"

"Shucks, Lide!" he scoffed in his happiness; "don't you mind what them fellers say. It's a cold bluff. They wanter bluff me off the place so they c'n chop you some mo' stove-wood. I know that gang. They ain't out fer no shootin' match with — with no plumb fool that they know *ken* shoot, an' *will* shoot, an' shoot troublesome ruther'n step up an' be hanged. There's a wasps' nest up there among them rafters, anyhow, an' I thes would n't choose to be hanged so clost to no wasps' nest. 'Sides, I would n't leave the Conway gate now, wasps' nest er no wasps' nest, with a hangin' th'owed in!"

"But please, Nelse, do it for — for me."

"Why, Lide" — and he said it as if he meant it, — "I could whoop all the raiders in Kentucky to-night!"

He led her out to his old seat on the porch, and they talked it over there for nearly an hour, he finally promising magnanimously, "thes to

satisfy you, Lide," that he would call on one of the guards at Sibley's Mill to reinforce him, if young Dave Conway did not get home next day. Then Lide went to the cottage, and came back with Dave's rifle, insisting that she intended to take Dave's place that night, and Nelse was standing on the porch before her, roaring with laughter and threatening that if she did not return to the cottage and go to sleep he would "bodaciously tote" her there, as he had done once before, when his laughter abruptly ceased at the sudden and near sound of a horse galloping away from them, up the pike.

Lide and Nelse looked at each other comprehendingly. No one had ridden through the gate.

"Some loafer sky-larkin' roun'," Nelse said reassuringly.

"It was somebody spyin' on the gate, to find out if you were here," Lide answered with quickened breath.

"Well, he found out, an' I reckon what he found out," replied Nelse confidently, "will satisfy him fer *this* night. Now, you run on back to the house, my — my girl, ef you don't wanter make me lose my job. The fact is,

I 've been so took up an' turned 'roun' with you tonight that I plumb forgot I was a awficer of the law, an' that sneak might 'a' touched a match to the toll-house 'thout my layin' eyes on him."

XV

SOME RAIDERS AND A THEORY

"I HEAR somebody comin' now," said Lide, looking alertly up the turnpike.

"Oh, that ain't them," Nelse assured her; "they won't come on wheels."

It was Morgan Tunstall and his party, driving home from the railway station, on their return from Mammoth Cave. Tunstall, in his phaeton, with Mrs. Letcher, Kate Cockerill, and Hugh Letcher, passed through the gate without stopping. A few seconds later a second carriage followed, containing Margaret Helm, Florence Letcher, Nixon, and Sidney Garrard. Garrard pulled up the horses at the gate, and the party spoke to Lide cordially, Florence and Margaret leaning out and shaking her hand in unaffected admiration. Lide, since her adventure in attempting to defend the gate the previous week, was regarded as something of a heroine.

"No more attacks on the gate since we left?" inquired Garrard.

"No, sir," Lide answered; "Mr. Tigert has been guarding it every night."

"Ah? Well, that 's a good idea. I should n't like to attack a gate that Nelse was guarding."

"By order of Judge Gilbert," explained Nelse, standing a little straighter.

"But what are *you* doing with that gun, Miss Lide?" Garrard asked.

"This? Oh, this is Dave's. I just brought it over from the house."

"She 's got a notion the raiders are comin' ag'in," Nelse laughed softly, "an' she ain't good an' certain that Ic'n manage them by myself."

"Oh, Mr. Garrard!" Lide cried impulsively, stepping nearer, "you read it an' see if you don't think Nelse ought n't to pay some attention to it," handing him the warning she had found stuck on the door earlier in the evening.

Garrard read it slowly two or three times.

"Where did you get it?" he asked lightly, as he handed it back.

Lide explained.

"Well, I should n't worry about it at all,"

he said, as if it were not worth further consideration.

He drove on; but fifteen minutes later, when he had said good-night to Margaret and Florence at Letcher Tavern, he called to Hugh, who was smoking outside, Tunstall having left Mrs. Letcher and Hugh at the Tavern and gone on with Kate Cockerill.

"I 'm afraid there may be trouble again at the Conway gate to-night," Garrard declared, as Hugh came out and lifted one foot to the wheel hub.

"What makes you think so?"

"A rather ugly warning left at the gate to-night, together with the fact that since reading it I have recalled several circumstances that look a little suspicious. There was that fellow we met on the other side of the Conway gate — he was certainly going somewhere and for some purpose. At any rate, he was going in the direction of Windrow's Bend. There was the neigh of a horse in the bushes as we passed Windrow's Bend, further back, before we met this fellow. Now, what business have horses in Windrow's Bend at this time of night? We have either passed or met half a dozen men to-night all of whom were going toward Wind-

row's Bend, and all of whom edged away from us on the road. Since I have been waiting here I heard two more gallop along the pike beyond Burnham's yonder and turn off into Burnham's lane. It may be only a coincidence, but Burnham's lane is the only route they can take from here to reach Windrow's Bend conveniently without going through the Conway gate. Besides, we know the state of feeling now against the toll-gates."

"Nelse Tigert is still on guard at the Conway gate, is n't he?" Hugh asked.

"Yes. That 's one reason why an attack on the gate to-night would be a much more serious matter than the one last week was. Nelse, as well as some of the raiders, would be pretty sure to fare roughly."

"Well, do you propose anything?"

"Yes. I shall stop awhile with Nelse as I go back. If you like you and Nix might join us. We four should make a pretty formidable garrison for the Conway gate."

"Now, Sid," Nixon protested, "I 'll sit up with Nelse, but you drive on home. You are n't nominated yet, and you 're a fool to go out of your way to set all this anti-toll-gate crowd against you."

"Right you are, Nix," Hugh exclaimed. "You and I can keep Nelse company to-night. There's no use of Sid getting mixed up in this business. It would beat him, sure."

"You go to the house," Garrard enjoined him, "and get a couple of guns, without letting any of the family see you. We can talk over the other point on the way."

Hugh got the guns, and as the three drove back to the Conway gate he and Nixon renewed their protestations against Garrard's taking any unnecessary risk of weakening himself in his race for Congress by helping Nelse Tigert guard the gate.

"You admit that these raiders and their sympathizers are strong and unreasonable in this county," Hugh urged, "and that to excite their hostility won't help you to win your race."

"I admit," Garrard replied; "but Nelse may be in a tight place to-night, and may need us."

"I'm afraid you'll never make a politician, Sid."

"Oh, well, as far as that is concerned, this turnpike rioting is a matter of public interest, and the voters have a right to know what I think of it."

"But you can afford to wait till they ask you what you think of it. There 's no occasion for your mixing up in it in this ruinous manner. Nix and I are all the reinforcement Nelse will need."

"But are n't you a politician yourself?"

"I 'm out of politics and intend to stay out."

"I could n't ask you and Nix to go where I would n't go. Besides, three of us on Nelse's staff will be more effective than two, if the raiders should come. There will be less probability that they will fight at all if they find the gate strongly guarded. Nelse's conceit, his reputation as a rifle shot, his recent association with the raiders, and his desire to 'show off' before his sweetheart have made him overconfident, yet I am pretty sure that Nelse's contempt for the raiders is not altogether unjust to them. I have long been convinced that the average mob, when not aroused to frenzy by some unusually atrocious crime, has n't a surplus of courage, and that a determined resistance by even greatly inferior numbers will stop it and put it to flight. I believe that three fourths of the mobs that go around lynching negroes and all of them that go around burning toll-gates could be routed by a sheriff and

two or three deputies who were men enough to do their duty. The chief trouble is that these law officers either sympathize with the mob or are too cowardly to oppose it. They do not seem to realize that a man, though brave enough ordinarily, is usually more of a coward than they are themselves when he is taking part in the unlawful enterprise of a mob. It is not often that he will run much real risk of getting a bullet in his skin, to say nothing of discovery. Nelse and two of us would no doubt be ample to protect the Conway gate, but Nelse and all of us would be as good as a regiment."

He had his way. Nelse Tigert laughingly scoffed at the possibility of his needing their assistance, but he took the horses to the stable cheerfully.

"There wa' n't no use of you all comin'," he said; "but I 'm glad you did come, anyhow. It 's powerful lonesome here 'long towards day. Maybe wec'n have a little game of seven-up."

But there was no seven-up. Lide, happily confident now of the safety of the gate and of Nelse, had retired to the cottage, leaving Dave's rifle at the toll-house "in case it might be needed." The four men lounged on the porch

for an hour, when Nixon, removing his coat and turning a chair down as a pillow, stretched himself on the floor, with the request that he be called if visitors should arrive. A little after twelve o'clock Hugh yawned that he believed he would follow Nix's example.

"Better wait a minute," suggested Garrard. "Do you hear anything, Nelse?"

It was very still. The moon, red with what Nelse had interpreted as "rain before she changes," was low in the west. The trees seemed to have drawn the shadows of the night about them and were motionless in sleep. There was not even a lisp in the field of corn across the road. The one sound that dominated the silence had the effect of only deepening it, — the slumberous, soothing murmur of the shoals in the little river a mile distant.

"Yes," Nelse answered; "I hear Sanders' Shoals, an' I don't know as I ever heerd 'em from the Conway gate befo'."

"And *I* hear what sounds like a troop of cavalry, up the road," Garrard declared.

Nelse bent forward intently for a second. "By Hannah Maria!" he exclaimed, "so do I!"

He took up his gun, which had been standing against the wall.

"I never would 'a' thought," he added, "that you had better hearin' than me, Sid Garrard!"

"Oh, Sid 's a politician, and he keeps his ears to the ground," Hugh Letcher remarked.

"He does, does he?" Nelse studied Hugh's countenance as if not quite sure that he understood thoroughly. "Well, ef he don't want to hear things that would n't do him no good, I 'd advise him not to be ketched here to-night. Them 's voters hittin' the pike now, an' there 's lots mo' of the same stripe in Luttroll County."

"Excellent advice, Nelse," Hugh replied; "too good to be thrown away on a man predestined always to do his best to elect the other fellow. Get up there, Nix," kicking Nixon's foot, "or you 'll miss the fun."

Nixon rolled over and raised up on his elbow, growling:

"To the devil with you, Spud! Don't want any breakfast 'smorning."

The night-riders were drawing rapidly nearer. The ring of the hoof-beats on the hard turnpike was now so distinct that Nelse Tigert claimed he could "come mighty clost to countin' the lay-out. There 's about twenty in it —not mo' than twenty-five nor less than fifteen." Soon they were visible, their backs

against the sinking moon. As they swept forward along the white strip of the road, there was a jubilant yell from a single throat, followed by a gruff "Shut up!" in a lower voice. The troop galloped as near as sixty yards of the toll-gate before they stopped, and as they drew rein Nelse Tigert stepped out into the road in front of the toll-house.

"I reckon you all better wait there tell you 're invited to come any furder, boys," he called out good-humoredly.

One of the masked raiders, holding up a handkerchief tied to the muzzle of his gun, trotted forward half the distance to the gate and halted.

"Nelse Tigert," he shouted, "you know what we 're here fer, an' I thes wanter tell you that they ain't no use of havin' no foolin'. We don't want no trouble, but we 're a-goin' to chop down that gate an' burn down that toll-house; an' we 're a-goin' to do the square thing to keep from havin' no trouble an' give you a fair chance to throw up yo' job an' move outer the way. We ain't disputin' yo' spunk, but I reckon youc'n see we 're a few too many fer you."

"Say, Shack," Nelse responded, "you ough-

ter wear a muzzle along with yo' mask ef yo' don't want yo' old friends to know you. But I ain't throwin' up no jobs, Shack; an' right now my job is to keep this gate from bein' chopped down an' this toll-house from bein' burned down. Is that all you wanted to say, Shack?"

"I thes wanted to give you fair notice, Nelse, to save onnecessary trouble; an' fair notice I done give you. Now, I ain't got but one mo' thing to say. I 'm a-goin' back to the boys yonder, an' we 're a-goin' to wait thes two minutes by the watch fer you to ac' reasonable an' step out o' the way. Then we 're a-goin' to chop down the gate an' burn down the toll-house, trouble er no trouble."

The man with the flag of truce pulled his horse around to ride back, but Nelse halted him.

"Wait a minute, Shack. I ain't had my say yit. You give the boys up yonder my love an' affection," raising his voice so that the boys could hear him themselves, "an' tell 'em as a particular favor to me I want 'em to take due notice of that 'ere tree standin' on the side of the road a little ways in front of 'em. It 's a slippery-ellum tree, an' bein' as it is the only

tree between here an' them, they cain't mistake it. Now I 'm a-goin' to stan' here behind this red-oak tree — I 'm free to say that considerin' the number of you all I 'm a-goin' to take to timber — an' the fus one of you that comes this side of that slippery-ellum, well, I 'm a-goin' to do my level bes' to keep him from a-comin' any furder; an' I 'm livin' in hopes that Ic'n stop a passel of you all between here and the slippery-ellum. I reckon you all know whether Ic'n shoot."

"All right, Nelse," answered Shack. "We ain't honin' fer no ruckus, an' we 've done done the fair thing to keep from havin' no ruckus; but ef you mus' have it, you mus'. An' I reckon other folks kin shoot some, too, Nelse."

Shack rode back to his command. There was evidently a hurried and disorderly conference. There was a confusion of voices, several of which could be understood at the toll-gate:

"Then we won't give the fool no two minutes!"

"We better bushwhack him through the corn-field!"

"Or flank him through the yard!"

"To hell with the slippery-ellum! I 'm

fer ridin' him straight down right over the turnpike!"

Garrard stepped from the shadow of the porch to the moonlit road.

"Hugh," he said, "would n't it be well for you and Nix to show yourselves for a second out here by Nelse and his red-oak?"

He walked up the turnpike about twenty paces, that he might be within better speaking distance of the raiders.

"Here, Sid," Nixon objected; "no use your acting smart now and getting too far away from the red-oak."

"Boys," began Garrard, stopping on the road and addressing the raiders, "wait a minute where you are. I've a few words to say to you."

"Why, he 's goin' to make a speech," commented Hugh. "The ruling passion strong in death."

From the group of raiders came such ejaculations as:

"I know that voice!"

"What 's *he* doin' here?"

"Damned if 't ain't Sid Garrard!"

"Yes," admitted the speaker, "it 's Sid Garrard. I've come over with Hugh Letcher

and Bob Nixon to keep you and Nelse Tigert out of trouble."

"Well," shouted the leader, Shack, riding forward a few feet in front of the others, "you an' Hugh Letcher an' Bob Nixon had better go back to keep yo'selves outer trouble. An' you better take Nelse 'long with you, I reckon."

"Now, see here, boys," Garrard urged, "you 'd better act reasonably about this matter. You know very well that you have come to do an unlawful deed; that Nelse is an officer of the law who is here to protect the toll-gate, and that before you can do what you came to do you will have to kill him, and you don't believe you will be able to do that before he kills some of you. Is the destruction of the toll-gate worth what it will cost?"

"Oh, come off! This ain't no stump speakin'!" yelled one of the raiders.

"That 's yo' Sid Garrard!" one was heard to scoff at another. "*Now* maybe you still think he 's fer the people, heh?"

"We never come here to debate, Mr. Garrard," Shack responded. "We come here fer business, an' we 're a-goin' to 'ten' to business. We ain't got nothin' ag'in' you an' Mr. Nixon

an' Mr. Letcher, an' th' ain't no call fer you all goin' outn yo' way to git in our way. So you all better stan' aside an' not meddle in what don't concern you. That's fair an' square warnin'. An' that's all there is to it."

"Not quite," answered Garrard. "We have a warning to give from our side. There are four of us, and we are well armed and pretty well sheltered. We are determined that you sha'n't destroy the gate without killing us, and we don't believe you can do that. Now, I serve notice on all of you that if you raise a hand against this gate to-night I am going to do my best to send every one of you to the penitentiary, and if you kill any of us to-night the survivors will do their best to send you to the gallows."

There were howls and jeers of indignation and derision from the raiders.

"Let him have it now!" cried one, as a rifle was levelled at Garrard.

But Shack threw up his hand imperatively. "Stop that!" he ordered; and as Nelse, Hugh, and Nixon sprang toward Garrard, the gun was lowered, and Shack snapped his fingers at Garrard, declaring:

"We don't care that fer yo' notices an'

warnin's. We 're a-goin' to 'ten' to this business — when we git ready. We ain't got nothin' ag'in' you an' Letcher an' Nixon — that is, not enough to hanker after shootin' you down fer a old toll-gate. Besides, there 's another way of gittin' even with you, Sid Garrard, an' there 'll be a heap mo' fun in it than there 'd be in thes a few minutes' shootin' match."

"How much did they pay you when you sold out, Siddie?" a raider shouted.

Shack rejoined his gang, and Garrard and his friends had started back to the toll-gate when one of the masked men, thrashing the ribs of a mule with his legs, galloped down the road with such momentum that the slippery-elm was passed a few feet before the animal could be stopped and jerked back.

"Look out there, Nelse Tigert!" the rider of the mule cried hastily, crouching low over the mule's neck. "We 're on our own side of the slippery-ellum!"

Then, as the laughter of Nelse and several of the raiders ceased, the rider of the mule raised himself in the saddle and in a surer voice continued:

"I let you know, Sid Garrard, that you ain't the only man in Kentucky that kin make a

speech; an' I tell you to yo' face, Sid Garrard, that I been fer you, thick an' thin, wet er dry, play er pay; that I have stood up fer you tell I have been knocked down fer you; that I have been made fun of fer you, got drunk fer you, fell outn trees fer you; that I have been called a lie when I said you was ag'in' the plutycrats an' that I always up an' give it out flat-footed that thes they wait tell you come *to* the plutycrats. But I have done foun' you out to-night, Sid Garrard, an' I let you know that I wash my hands er you. Yes, sir, I wash my hands er you. An' now, feller citizens," turning to the raiders, "le's all give three cheers fer Tunstall!"

The cheers were given boisterously, and as the orator rode back to his companions Nelse Tigert called after him:

"Say, Dunk, nex' time you wanter disguise yo'self you better take yo' mask an' put it on Uncle Jesse Craik's mule."

The four men returned to the toll-house, and the raiders for perhaps ten minutes held the position they had taken beyond the slippery-elm. They were noisy with laughter, a few oaths, some argument and protestation, but finally they rode away in the direction whence

they had come, an occasional whoop and two or three pistol-shots marking their recession.

"Your theory about rioters, Sid," observed Nixon, sitting on the edge of the toll-house porch, "seems to have been right in this instance. There goes your mob."

"And there go enough votes to give the county to Tunstall," added Hugh Letcher.

XVI

"FROM A STAFF CORRESPONDENT"

ABOUT a month later the Luttroll County convention was held at Yardley, to select delegates to the district convention. The ladies of Letcher Tavern had spent that month in the mountains of West Virginia, and, undiverted by their presence, both Tunstall and Garrard had devoted their time to the campaign for Congress. On the night before the convention a staff correspondent of the Louisville *Globe* sent this despatch from Yardley to his paper: —

"The eve before the battle for the Luttroll delegation to-morrow finds both sides stubbornly contesting every point and the friends of both Tunstall and Garrard claiming the victory. There has been no such fight in any county of the district as in old Luttroll. It is not only the home county of both contestants, but it is thought to be the keystone to the district arch. In other words, the general belief is that the Luttroll delegation in the district convention

will hold the balance of power, and that whoever names the Luttroll delegation to-morrow will win the nomination two weeks later. This seems to be as sure a forecast as can be made in politics, and in my previous despatches covering the district I have given convincing facts and reasons for this conclusion. In a nutshell, to recapitulate the result of my thorough canvass of the entire district, the situation seems clearly to be that without the vote of Luttroll there will be a deadlock in the district convention between Tunstall, Garrard, and Poindexter, and to break this deadlock the vote of Luttroll will be absolutely necessary. The interest in the county convention at Yardley to-morrow is, therefore, more intense, in all probability, than it will be in the district convention at Bracebury next month. For, in this view of the situation, it is at Yardley, rather than at Bracebury, that the identity of the next Congressman from this district is to be decided.

"Poindexter has made no fight for this county. Tunstall has spoken only once, and very briefly, but his campaign has been a thoroughgoing Tunstall campaign. What that means, many a gentleman who has gone up against it and who is now in the retirement of private life knows too well. From personal observation I can say that Tunstall's organization in the county is as expert a piece of workmanship as that master of the art ever turned out. It seems to be perfect. His friends and managers claim that they

will have no trouble in naming and instructing the delegation to-morrow, and it is evident that they are confident in their claims.

"On the other hand, Garrard's fight has been as plucky as was ever made by a crippled bulldog. For pure gameness and grit I have never seen it surpassed. At the outset of the campaign the odds in Luttroll were with Garrard. He had lived all his life in the county; Tunstall had only of late years returned to resume his residence here. As a young man, Garrard was personally popular in an exceptional degree. It was this popularity, his sociable, free-and-easy democracy, that elected him to the Legislature the first time, notwithstanding the fact, as I am reliably informed, that his candidacy then was taken largely as a joke. But he made such a record and reputation that, though it is a question if a majority of his party here did not disapprove of his tendency to independence in the Speaker's chair, his home people were tickled at the prominence he had given the district and were more or less proud of him on that account. This and, perhaps more than this, his undiminished personal popularity gave him, at the beginning of the present campaign, an advantage over Tunstall in the county. If to-morrow's convention had been held a month ago, it would have been a Garrard convention, notwithstanding Tunstall's superb work. But the now celebrated incident of the Conway toll-gate turned the county against Garrard in a

night. The anti-toll-gate craze was at its height. Many of these people had worked themselves up to the belief that it was justifiable to destroy the toll-gates. Others, ever ready to range themselves against the established order, and still others, ever ready to take a drink and smash a law for the fun of it, swelled the free-turnpike crusaders to such numbers that when Garrard openly defended the Conway gate against them, even threatening them with the penitentiary and the halter, his cause seemed hopeless. The wonder was that he did not quit the race. His friends gave up, to a man, and several who had money, hats, and cigars on his winning paid their bets. But Garrard was no quitter. Like Paul Jones, when apparently knocked out of the water, he had only just begun to fight. It was then that the same stuff showed in him that showed in his course as Speaker. Instead of surrendering, he changed his plan of campaign and boldly pitched it in defiance of the lawless element he had aroused against himself. He 'carried the war into Africa.' He went over every foot of the county, making a speech every day, sometimes two or three a day, openly demanding the observance of the law, however unpopular it might be, uncompromisingly reprobating lawlessness, insisting that lawful methods alone must be followed in freeing the turnpikes, declaring that he would repeat, if necessary, his action at the Conway gate, and that he would do what he could as a citizen of the State to prevent

the nullification of its laws and to impose upon those guilty the penalty of their crimes.

"Naturally his campaign was a hot one. Time and again was he warned not to visit, or to leave, different parts of the county. More than once was his life covertly threatened, and it is an open secret that his friends feared for his safety; while predictions were heard on every hand that he would not live through the campaign. But he was to be neither dissuaded nor intimidated. He kept up what many termed his foolhardy fight to the end. And not without result. Kentuckians love a good fighter, a square fighter, a foolhardy fighter. There was no discount on Garrard's honesty and courage, however much there may have been on his principles. Those who agreed with him were all the more active in his interest, but even among the free-turnpike element there was in time some reaction, though the extremists among them are all still wild for Tunstall, who had the shrewdness not to entangle himself in this matter, which, after all, does not come within the scope of Congress. As it is, the friends of Garrard, who had given up the ghost three weeks ago, now claim that they will be able to control the convention to-morrow, though by a small margin."

At the bottom of the last sheet of the foregoing despatch, as received at the office of

the *Globe*, was this private message to the editor: —

"Have tried to follow instructions and give summary of situation from standpoint of both sides without committing the paper to forecasting success of either. Tunstall has a cinch."

The same correspondent's detailed report of the convention as it appeared in the *Globe* was preceded by this introduction: —

"The unexpected has happened. While the supporters of Tunstall were last night sure of naming a straight Tunstall delegation in the convention to-day, and while the supporters of Garrard were claiming that their man would win; while most people here were confident that Tunstall would have a solid delegation, and while some clung to the hope that Garrard might pull through, no one looked for the actual result — a dog-fall. It had been universally assumed that either Tunstall or Garrard would have the entire delegation. It had not been conceived within the range of probabilities that the best that either would be able to secure would be an uninstructed, divided delegation. Yet that was the outcome of to-day's convention, the delegation, which was chosen after a long and fierce struggle on both sides, being not only uninstructed, but being, as far as can be ascertained,

pretty evenly balanced between the two candidates. How sharply the line of cleavage in the delegation is, may be judged from the fact that the Garrard men are represented on it by such leaders as the Hon. Hugh Letcher, the Hon. Robert K. Nixon, the Hon. Nelson Tigert, and the Hon. W. C. ("Pap") Maxey; while among Tunstall's partisans on the delegation are the Hon. Shelby Letcher, the Hon. John W. Driggs, the Hon. Breckinridge Bodine, the Hon. Jesse D. Craik, and the Hon. Dunkerson Peabody. How this desperately fought battle came to be a drawn battle, forms one of the most interesting chapters in Kentucky politics."

As such a chapter is not essential to this narrative, nor materially different from many chapters in the politics of other States, the remainder of the *Globe's* despatch, describing in full the proceedings of the Yardley convention, is not reproduced here.

XVII

MARGARET HELM SHOCKS GOOD PEOPLE

MEANTIME, in the mountains of West Virginia, the woman who had once been Morgan Tunstall's wife had met the woman he wished to make his wife.

This summer resort to which Mrs. Letcher, with Margaret Helm and Florence, had come was one of several similar places in the Alleghanies. Aside from its high altitude, its primary attraction is a copious spring whose waters, according to tradition, were once chemically analyzed, what purports to have been the result being presented upon the hotel stationery to this day. The hotel itself is a large, massive structure of brick, built in the substantial and simple style of the Virginia of a hundred years ago. The long, two-story building, with its spacious dining-room and ball-room and its scores of bed-rooms, is girdled by wide galleries. Steps run down from these galleries

to a tree-studded lawn, that extends some two hundred yards to the spring and the swimming pool and to the flanking brick cottages. The frequenters of this resort are mainly from Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana, the society of Richmond, Washington, Baltimore, Louisville, and New Orleans being always well represented here in July and August. Many families return here summer after summer until they are regarded as fixtures of the season, and the women who got their first taste of social life here as young girls, before formally entering upon the stage as "debutantes," come back here year after year, and continue as matrons, widows, or old maids the life they first learned here as children. It is yet one place in the country where the old maid may be seen, — not the bachelor girl or the new woman, but the real, feminine old maid, on whom the originally doubtful designation sits as a distinction, who is rich in memories of past summers on this lawn and in this ball-room, and who would be out of place at the mountain and sea-side resorts of a more modern and garish fashion. Dancing and dining have long been the principal divertisements here. There are dancers in the ball-room every evening, and occasionally there is

a formal cotillion. Cards and a little horseback riding help to pass the time. In the mornings there is a brass concert on the lawn, and latterly golf links are an innovation welcomed by the more actively inclined.

The Letchers — mother and daughter — and Margaret Helm had been here about ten days when Mrs. Grace Knowles arrived with her maid and took one of the cottages. Margaret's attention was first directed to her because of her isolation. She seemed to have neither friends nor acquaintances among the guests. When visible at all, she was always alone. In the dining-room she had to herself a little table in an inconspicuous corner near the entrance. Sometimes she sat stiffly for a quarter of an hour on the hotel gallery before returning to her cottage. Usually during the morning concerts she appeared with a book in her hand, if there was an unoccupied seat on some unfrequented part of the lawn. It was plain that she did not seek to make any overtures for the establishment of a social relation different from that which she had accepted from the first, and it was equally plain that the guests, taking their cue from the Kentuckians, had no thought of assuming any different attitude toward her.

They simply ignored her, even the middle-aged idlers of her own sex rarely exchanging a covert sneer at her.

Margaret Helm, who did not know and had not asked anything of the history of this poor creature, could not help some feeling of pity for her. It was clear that she was without the pale, for what reason Margaret had neither knowledge nor curiosity, but the loneliness of the woman, the quiet bravado with which she recognized her position and persisted in her course, appealed to Margaret with a touch of pathos. This appeal was not weakened by Margaret's realization, which was soon forced on her, that she herself seemed to be an object of some exceptional interest to Mrs. Knowles. Margaret became aware that Mrs. Knowles was given to eying her at every opportunity. When the two were at all near each other, it mattered not how many other people were in the vicinity, Margaret could rarely look toward Mrs. Knowles without finding the woman's gaze fixed on her, with something in its expression that puzzled her in its suggestion of fear and longing.

In appearance Mrs. Knowles was not attractive. One's first casual impression on beholding

her would be of a studied artificiality to stay and replace the physical charms of youth, the result being, instead of the arrest of decay or the obliteration of its effects, a more positive definement of its ravages and an aggressive materialization of the persistence with which the losing fight against it had been made. A closer study of the face might reveal a consciousness of the futility of the fight, and this in itself added to the countenance a further touch of hardness, to be interpreted possibly as the index of a settled stoicism. Such an observer as circumstances and sensibility had made of Margaret Helm would have quickly concluded that this stoicism was rooted more deeply than in the failure of a vain woman to preserve her beauty.

One morning Margaret and Florence had been sitting on a bench at the edge of the lawn, Margaret with a book and Florence with her work-basket. The concert was about half over when Florence left and went to the hotel. A few minutes later Margaret looked up and saw Mrs. Knowles standing a dozen yards away. She was gazing intently, appealingly, at Margaret, and she seemed to shrink back a step as Margaret raised her eyes. Her hand

went nervously to her bosom, which Margaret could see was agitated.

"She is trying to make up her mind to come over here and speak to me," was Margaret's conclusion as she turned again to her book.

She had not read ten lines before she was aware that Mrs. Knowles had walked forward and stopped at one end of the bench. Margaret's eyes remained on the page, though she was no longer reading.

"May I sit here?" said a voice timidly uncertain, yet with a strain of defiance. "All the other seats seem occupied."

Margaret glanced up perfunctorily.

"Certainly," she answered; after which she returned to her book.

She read a paragraph twice without comprehension. Two thirds of the guests, most of them women, were on the lawn, and Margaret felt that the eyes of every one of them were directed toward her. In spite of herself a flush began to steal into her face, and the consciousness of this only deepened the flush and stung her with prickling points of heat. She turned over the leaf ostentatiously, and seeing that the novel ended with only another quarter page, she read it religiously, being careful to hold the

book so that Mrs. Knowles might easily perceive that the last of the closing chapter had been reached. Then she shut the volume with a final snap, gazed meditatively at nothing for a few seconds, as if weighing what she had read, and without glancing at Mrs. Knowles a second time, rose and walked across the lawn to the hotel.

It was a longer walk than it had ever been to her before. There were so many people to be passed, and most of them looked at her with something more than conventional bows or words of recognition, their voices and smiles betraying their approving, and in some instances sympathetically amused, appreciation of what she had done. But this approval and amusement, restrained and well bred as they were, grated uncomfortably on the girl as she went toward the hotel. She could not help feeling that she had done a small thing; that she had pettily and publicly wounded a fellow creature; and that, however callous this woman had become, the wound was real and needless. Margaret inwardly resented the commendatory interest which she perceived as she made her way past these refined-faced, soft-voiced women. At the moment she would have pre-

ferred their contempt to their commendation. She had a flood of her own contempt.

As she went into the hotel, her steps quickened and her color heightened. Her rising anger burned in her cheeks and eyes. Entering her room, she walked across it two or three times with aimless impatience. She stopped at a window and looking out over the lawn, saw the lonely figure of Mrs. Knowles still sitting stiffly on the bench.

"It was cowardice! cowardice!" she indignantly said aloud. "I had nothing against her! I felt nothing against her! I did it simply because those people were looking on, and I was afraid to be seen with her!"

She turned impetuously from the window and started across the room to the door. At the table on which she had dropped the book she had been reading, she suddenly halted, stood irresolute for an instant, and then seized another book lying on the table. She was transformed in a flash. The anger in her face and voice was routed by a childish and joyous radiance. Looking through the window again, she laughed gayly:

"They thought that I left the poor soul because I would not sit on the same seat with

her; they shall think now that I left her only to get another book."

She hurried down the stairs with a ripple of song on her lips, but as she emerged from the hotel she restrained her steps to the more deliberate dignity and assumed the more normal unconcerned and reposeful expression which were quite the thing among young women of the best circles at this resort.

As she retraced her way across the lawn straight to the seat by Mrs. Knowles, Margaret, holding her skirts with one hand and the fresh book with the other, longed to smile at the imperfectly repressed signs of astonishment which she saw, from the corners of her eyes, among the good people in sight of whom she passed. But she forgot these as she drew near Mrs. Knowles, and noticed the even more imperfectly repressed intensity and eagerness with which that woman watched her coming, — the incredulity, surprise, and suspense which broke over and almost softened the painted and cracked face. Involuntarily Margaret hastened her approach a little, and as she regained the seat she had left a few minutes before, there was an answering quickening of her own breath to that which heaved the

breast of the woman at the other end of the bench.

Their eyes met as Margaret sat down. Mrs. Knowles reluctantly turned her head away, and Margaret bent over and scanned the title-page of her book. She had seen, with a momentary little ache in her throat, that Mrs. Knowles' eyes, which had seemed as if they had been forever dry, suddenly filled.

After a little Margaret summoned her will, and said with a fairly successful effort to appear at natural ease:

"Do you know, I am just starting to read *Commerford?* Everybody else seems to have read it long ago, and I feel dreadfully behind the times."

Mrs. Knowles flinched perceptibly. She turned at the words, her lips twitching in silence before she framed an answer.

"I have not read it either," she said nervously. "It — it is a sequel to *The Survivors*, is it not? If it is as good as *The Survivors*, you have a treat before you, don't you think so?"

"Indeed, I have n't even read *The Survivors*. I do remember now that *Commerford* is a sequel to it, and I suppose one should read

The Survivors first; but there are so few books of any kind here that one has little choice."

"I have a copy of *The Survivors*. If you would like to read it, I 'd be glad to lend it to you."

"Oh, thank you! And as you have n't read *Commerford* we might exchange."

Thus the acquaintance between the two began. The good people on the lawn were not near enough to hear the conversation between Miss Helm and "that Knowles woman," but they saw with due astonishment that there was a conversation, which lasted fully five minutes, and they were still further shocked when Miss Helm actually walked by the side of the Knowles woman to the door of the latter's cottage and waited while the woman entered and reappeared with a book, which Miss Helm received from her and bore back to the hotel! Miss Helm was a very nice girl, but she was evidently unusually ignorant or unusually indiscreet. Mrs. Letcher should look after her charge more closely.

It was not long before Mrs. Letcher did take it upon herself to do what she called her duty by Margaret. Florence Letcher had remonstrated with Margaret against having anything

to do with Mrs. Knowles; but Margaret, while readily promising that she would not seek the woman's society, for which she had no desire, refused to agree to cut her or snub her when thrown in contact with her. Florence then carried the case to her mother.

"It was just like Margaret," Florence said, after explaining the matter to Mrs. Letcher. "She sees that everybody here disapproves of her course, and that makes her all the more stubborn."

"It is more like her to pity the creature so that she is willing to scandalize the whole place rather than hurt the feelings of one woman. Margaret is a dear girl, but she is peculiar in some things."

"As if such a woman has any feelings to be hurt, or if she has, as if they ought not to be hurt! Margaret is a dear old goose, and she only laughs when I tell her so."

"How much have you told her about the Knowles woman?"

"That she was the wife of one man and ran away with another, whom she afterwards married; that in Louisville, where she lived with her first husband and where she was brazen enough to live with her second also, nobody

had anything to do with her. That was all I knew about the woman myself, except that her first husband was Mr. Tunstall."

"And did you tell Margaret that, too?"

"N-no. I did n't see the use. She knows all about Mr. Tunstall's marriage and divorce that the rest of us know, except that this particular woman was the one who was his wife. It would n't make any difference, but it would make it unpleasant to tell her that, don't you think so?"

"Yes, I understand. And she will find it out from somebody soon enough, anyway."

Mrs. Letcher herself, in accordance with Florence's suggestion, gave Margaret a "lecture" on her civility to the Knowles woman; but Mrs. Letcher was a poor lecturer of anybody, and a very poor lecturer of Margaret; the result being that instead of carrying her point she half-way apologized to Margaret, when the girl, at the end of the argument between them, took her chaperone's face between her hands, and kissing her, smiled appealingly:

"Please do not be vexed with me, dear Mrs. Letcher, and please do not ask me to snub the poor thing. I'll promise never to make any advances toward her, but when we are thrown

together let me be polite to her. She probably has been a bad woman, and may be yet, but it won't do her any harm, or me either, to treat her like a human being; on the contrary, I can see it does her real good."

XVIII

THE PENALTY

MRS. GRACE KNOWLES had come to this particular mountain resort simply because she had seen in the papers that Margaret Helm was there.

Kentuckians had never fully understood the destruction of Morgan Tunstall's home and the sequel as lived by the Knowles pair not half a mile from the spot where that home had been. All that they knew was that Morgan Tunstall's young wife had fled one night with Julius Knowles, a leader in cultured and fashionable circles; that Tunstall had secured a divorce; that Julius Knowles had married the woman, and that the two had returned to Louisville and lived in isolation as man and wife until the death of Knowles. Why they chose Louisville of all spots on earth, and why Tunstall never took any step to avenge the wrong that had been done him — never even noticing the existence of the couple long enough to put a bullet

through either of them — was known only to the Knowleses and Tunstall himself. If the whole of this story had been public property, as were several other stories of real life in Louisville which readers of fiction would pronounce much more improbable, it would at least have made it easier for Tunstall at first; and as for that, Kentuckians to this day have been heard to intimate that, though Morgan Tunstall surely in other instances proved his courage and protected his "honor," there must be some sort of "yellow streak" in a man who would silently submit, without so much as a lifted hand, to the insult which Julius Knowles put upon him. It was, indeed, this feeling that had been, at the beginning, the one obstacle to Tunstall's success in politics.

On the night when Tunstall had declared to his wife and Julius Knowles the alternatives noted in the first of these pages, he had been tremendously in earnest. Immediately afterward he had gone so far in his plan then announced as to send a detective to shadow the couple when they left the city, but had recalled him in less than a month, and had abandoned the plan, except as to the prosecu-

tion of the action for divorce. The passion of the crisis passed, he did not care to concern himself about this faithless woman and treacherous man. To spend his life in the execution of a scheme to punish them would be to spend his life in punishing himself by keeping them constantly in his mind. He turned his back on them and did what he could to forget them. But he did not stoop to tell them that he had put aside his purpose, and they never knew that he had. Knowles, being the coward that Tunstall had pronounced him, had gone on to his death, or at least until he was too callous to care, believing in Tunstall's vengeance because fearing it. Tunstall did not know it at the time, and may never have known it, but it was only necessary for a man like himself to wind the spring of cowardice in a man like Knowles in order to set going the machinery of his subsequent life. He might throw away the key and disappear himself, but his object was accomplished. Knowles knew that during the first few weeks after his departure from Tunstall's home with Grace Tunstall, Tunstall's spy had been set upon him; ever afterward — or until the time came when he cared for nothing — he was sure that he was always within reach

of Tunstall's spies, and all the surer of it when he did not see them.

There is a square in Louisville which, when this man and woman returned to the city as husband and wife, was one of the most fashionable residential quarters of the place. To-day it is a square of cheap boarding-houses, tenements, shoe-shops, plumbers' shops, and laundries, while one of the aristocratic mansions of the earlier time is now occupied entirely by negroes. This is the square on which Julius Knowles bought a handsome house, after vainly trying to lease one of the desirable houses that were "For Rent," though not to him. Here the Knowleses made their home, to the consternation of the neighbors, some of whom quietly formed a syndicate among themselves and offered Knowles, through a real-estate agent, three times what he had paid for the house. Failing in their efforts to secure the departure of the Knowleses, these neighbors began gradually sacrificing their own residences and moving to less objectionable parts of the city, making room for others not so fastidious as to their environment. The descent of the square, thus begun, was easy and inevitable.

The Knowleses were sensible enough at first

to stay closely within their handsome house. Even in summer, when everybody sits out of doors, they did not show themselves. There was a hush over the grim walls of the massive building, a sombreness in its heavy shade, that were impressive to those of even little imagination. Passers turned curious, solemn faces to its blank front, and nurses trundled their baby-carriages on the far side of the street.

For the first few months these two, behind the closed doors of their home, convinced themselves that they found enough in each other to make life not only endurable but desirable. They had been infatuated with each other; at least, he had been infatuated with her, and her vanity had been intoxicated with his infatuation. The reaction had not yet come fully to either. They succeeded in keeping alive for a while something of their old passion. They cheated themselves, at times, into belief that this was enough. "Tunstall was a fool," Knowles said at one of these times. "What does it matter where we are, so that we are together?"

But beyond this passion they had little to feed the life they were living. They might

have got on as well as many married couples if they had not been thrown entirely on their own resources, — if he had been in business, if she had had friends and social distractions. But they had only themselves, and they could not sleep enough to keep their waking hours from dragging. Knowles had been fond of reading before his marriage; books were a dead language to him now. He was neither in nor of their world; he cared nothing for it; the volumes in the library were so much decaying paper and leather. Sometimes he glanced at the *Globe*, though he took little interest in what he saw there, and when he found his wife poring over the "society" news through her tears he threatened to forbid that the sheet should be brought into the house. Knowles had loved merry company, and being a man of sufficient wealth to follow his inclinations unhampered by the necessity of earning his daily bread, he had usually found congenial and convivial companionship, if not in one part of the world, in another. But the club, which had been the centre of his life in Louisville, was now closed to him, and the good fellows who had constituted his "set" now passed him by without seeing him. He spent his days at

home, smoking, pulling the ears of his dog, or walking slowly back and forth under the grape arbor at the rear of the house.

Mrs. Knowles had one material advantage over Knowles in getting through this existence: she could sleep much more than he could. She lay in bed till noon, with the blinds drawn, and she could burrow on her face at almost any hour of the afternoon and doze. Then, too, her toilets took up much of her time. For nearly a year after her marriage to Knowles she was exceedingly careful about her toilets. She was solicitous to preserve and heighten her beauty. It is true that few besides Knowles saw her during that first year, but she understood that she must fight against the marks of age and decay if she would retain Knowles' interest, while, beyond that, she was anxious that not even the servants should have reason to notice that Mrs. Knowles was any the less beautiful or happy than Mrs. Tunstall had been. This engrossment in her dress was a double gratification to Knowles. It preserved much of the charm that had at first captivated him, and it afforded him hours of reprieve from the task of trying to entertain her and of pretending to be entertained by her. It gave

him hours for the more satisfying employment of pulling the ears of his dog.

Mrs. Knowles also had frequent recourse to the piano. She had learned partially three "pieces" at school, and she thrummed them on an excellent piano with a great deal of energy. Knowles, who was an ardent lover of good music, was reconciled to his wife's three pieces. They not only occupied considerable of her time, but they occupied it usually at dusk, when the neighbors were sitting on their porches, an hour which Mrs. Knowles seemed to think especially suitable for indicating that the closed doors of her own house did not exclude domestic gayeties and graces, and certainly an hour especially suitable for the strolls of Knowles and his dog out the back way and over the commons. Those strolls with his dog over the darkening fields were almost cheerful hiatuses in the routine of Knowles' existence at that period.

Another pastime of Mrs. Knowles was to stand behind the blinds and watch those who walked or drove by. Sometimes her face flushed, but more often hardened, as she saw the cold countenances turned curiously on her house, and again she shrank back suddenly as

if fearing discovery by those who had once been her associates and even friends. Knowles found her at two o'clock one morning kneeling in her night-gown at a window and peering at the house next door — before its owners had given it up to the dyers and the massage professor — listening to the old familiar dance music and intent on catching a glimpse, among the dancers or the departing guests, of those she had once known.

After dark it was some easier, at least on Knowles. The two could kill the hours before bedtime in long walks or longer drives; silent, it is true, for the most part, but relieved to some extent by varying scene and incident on which a remark could be hung. It was motion, it was change, and though commonplace enough, it gave better sleep afterward; while even commonplaces were important to lives in whose stagnation the daily visits of the butcher and the annual arrival of the caterpillars were notable events. Still, those evening walks and drives with his wife were not to Knowles all that his strolls with his dog were.

In the first few weeks after the couple's return to Louisville Mrs. Knowles had discovered that her husband was not immune from jeal-

ousy. He had come in one evening and found her at the door talking to a well-dressed man. She had explained truthfully that the stranger had rung the bell believing that the former owner of the house still resided there, and Knowles had endeavored with poor success to conceal his sudden doubts. Several evenings afterward, returning later than usual from his stroll with the dog, he found a line from his wife informing him that she had gone over to a little park with her maid for a few minutes to listen to the open-air concert. He had crushed the note in his clenched hand and stalked straightway to the park, to find her sitting in the shadow, on a bench on which, besides the maid, was this very stranger. Knowles took her home, and the explosion came. It was in vain she protested that his charges were ridiculous; that she had not even exchanged a word with the man; that he had taken his seat on the bench, which was public and one of many, without any attempt to open conversation with her and without appearing even to notice her. Knowles would not listen. He did not wish to hear anything she might say. He would not believe anything she chose to say about such a matter. Morgan Tunstall

may have trusted her once; no other man ever would.

That had been the beginning of months of espionage on her by Knowles, of vigilant watching, of sly traps laid for her, of incessant suspicion, hot reproaches, coarse accusations. It was before he ceased to care. Afterward, when he cared for nothing except his degenerate life, and least of all for her, the jealousy was hers, besetting him in tearful whines and peevish nagging, and culminating one night when she followed him to the entrance of a disreputable dance hall and was knocked down by him in his brandy-inflamed exasperation.

Soon after their return to Louisville they had assumed a brave front and gone to one of the theatres, but the frigid faces of former associates they saw there, the row of forbidding countenances they passed in order to get to their seats, the quiet desertion for another part of the house by a pair who had adjoining seats, deterred them from making another venture in public until the time came when they put on frigid faces themselves and defiantly went where they chose, if admission was to be had by purchase.

It was in the second year after their marriage,

while yet life together was tolerable, that their child was born. When Mrs. Knowles came out of the shadow, it was broken to her by her husband that the baby had died, and later, when she insisted on visiting its grave, he explained to her that the grave was in his family burying-ground in Virginia; that no child of theirs should sleep in Kentucky soil; that he had sent the little body to his old home, in order that its last resting-place might be free from the shame it could not have escaped in Louisville. It was not till three years afterward that in one of his outbursts of contemptuous passion Knowles revealed to her the truth.

"The child is not dead!" he had gloated over her. "I took her from your side because I would not allow her to draw sustenance from such a mother; because I would not allow her to breathe your atmosphere, to be infected by your influence, to be contaminated by your depravity, to share your disgrace. She is growing up among honest people; she has been given an honest name; she has been taught that her father and mother are dead; she is ignorant of her origin, and she shall always remain ignorant of it."

Subsequently, when the mother declared her

intention of going to her daughter, Knowles had quietly replied:

"You will do no such thing; and for several good reasons. You should not have forgotten yet that Morgan Tunstall does not propose to let you leave Louisville alive during my lifetime, and even if you escaped him, you could not escape me. I do not propose to let you leave Louisville alive while that child is outside of Louisville. But should you elude both Tunstall and me, you would be far from accomplishing your purpose. The family into which the child has been taken know you and your history, and they would guard your daughter from you as relentlessly as I do."

But it was not such threats as these that most restrained Mrs. Knowles from going to her daughter. It was the woman's common sense, made acute in the school of her own experience, and made stronger than her maternal yearning. Perhaps it might have been different if the mother had ever known the child, — if it had ever had a personality for her, binding itself into her life with the bonds that only actual baby fingers know how to tie. But from the first she had thought of it as dead, and now, after years, when she knew

otherwise, she knew also that Julius Knowles was more than half right. It was better as it was. It would be the act of a mother unworthier even than Julius Knowles held her to open the eyes of an innocent girl to such shame as the world would allot her as the daughter of Julius and Grace Knowles. She made no effort to interfere with Knowles' disposition of the child. She acquiesced in its loss to her as another feature of the inexorable penalty she was paying every hour of her life.

As the years passed, this man and woman ceased all pretence of interest in each other. She, no longer caring to please him, lapsed into the lassitude of a slattern; he, fastidious as he had once been regarding her personal appearance, was eventually callous even to disgust at her slovenliness. Though each in turn had burned with jealousy and distrust of the other, they later reached a point where he went his way and she hers, both relieved at the divergence of their paths, and neither concerned as to where the path of the other led. They continued to make their home in the same house, but beyond that there was no contact with each other, even superficially. She found a way of prolonging her sleeping

hours and of stimulating the dreams and phantasms of her waking, while he sought society and diversion in drinking-saloons and gambling-rooms.

The penalty inflicted on these two by Morgan Tunstall bore more heavily on the man than on the woman. She merely degenerated; he died. Once, in his last besotted days, when he realized that the end was near, he braced himself with brandy and taking a pistol went in search of Tunstall, determined to surrender his few remaining hours of life, if necessary, to settle his score with Tunstall. But even then his courage failed him, and he dared not face his old enemy, but crept back to the bed from which he did not rise again, his strongest curse being for his own cowardice.

The death of Julius Knowles left his widow free to go where she pleased, according to the terms of Tunstall's sentence, under which the two had supposed they had lived all the years since its pronouncement. But at first she did not change her place or mode of life. She no longer cared for freedom. There was nowhere to go, nothing outside the old existence to invite her interest — until one day she read in the *Globe* of Margaret Helm's arrival in the

West Virginia mountains. She read the item many times that day; she hunted the paper again and read the paragraph over the following day. Then a touch of living color came into her face, and she moved about the house for the first time in many months as one who had some definite object in view. She directed that her wardrobe be put in order; she got out once more her old powders and paints; and shortly afterward she had taken possession, with her maid, of one of the cottages at the mountain resort where Margaret Helm and the Letchers were spending the latter half of the summer.

XIX

ANOTHER PENALTY

THE Yardley convention was the last of the county conventions preliminary to the district convention, which was to assemble at Bracebury about two weeks later and make the nomination for Congress. Morgan Tunstall, knowing that he had done his work well and feeling confident as to the outcome, decided that during these intervening two weeks he would turn his back on politics and take a rest in the West Virginia mountains. Ordinarily nothing would have diverted him from the field of a political battle before its result was declared, even though, as in this instance, he was sure that he had done, or could yet direct, all that could be done; but now, after summoning two or three of his campaign managers and giving them explicit instructions as to what remained to be looked after, he left the scene of the struggle at Yardley and turned toward Margaret Helm with a sense of relief and elation.

Before, political battles had been sufficient in themselves to absorb his first interests and to monopolize his energies; now, they were things that must be got through with in order that he might find time to be with her, things to be won as trophies for her. Tunstall smiled boyishly as he recognized this transition in himself. It was a new birth that he had never dreamed of as possible, an obliteration and recreation that stirred him profoundly and exquisitely. "I am young again," he told himself as the train bore him on toward those magical mountains; "I have no past, and the future is all mine. It is youth, real youth, in all but counted years, which are counted no longer. And, thank God," glancing at his beaming face in the panelled mirror of the car, "I do not even look old. I am not old! I am not even fifty yet!"

It was long after midnight when he reached his destination. As the stage-coach that bore him from the railway station neared the old hotel in the mountains, he experienced a strange new impatience and expectancy. Somehow it was as if he were approaching the goal toward which all his longings and hopes had set, and where their full realization awaited

him. He was almost as a child in his repeated interrogation of the driver as to the distance yet to be traversed, and when at last he was answered that at the next turn of the road the springs would be in sight his pulse was pounding in his temples till the voice of the driver seemed to sink into an echo. At the turn of the road Tunstall's eyes softened and his breath suspended. Swell on swell of the mountain billows stretched away mistily in the moonlight, and in their midst the great hotel, that held all his world now, lay sombre and silent, like some anchored, sleeping ship.

Drawing nearer, Tunstall, who had fought his way among men with never a too scrupulous hand, felt the awe of a new reverence as he gazed up at the windows of this solemn pile, wondering which of them were hers, and knowing her presence as the worshipper knows the unseen spirit of the shrine before which he bows. With this spell upon Tunstall, the rasping halloo of the stage-driver, out of humor because his solitary passenger had refused to wait till morning to make the trip from the station to the hotel, was gratingly discordant, and Tunstall, as silent as the awakened clerk and porter, was shown to his room, acutely

conscious, in every hall and corridor of the old building through which he passed, of the nearness of Margaret Helm.

He was up early the next morning, long before there was any probability of seeing Margaret, and at last, after he had breakfasted with her and the Letchers, he requested — almost ordered — Margaret, as they stepped out on the gallery:

"Come with me now and show me something of the place."

There was not much to show, and a quarter of an hour's stroll found them standing on the grassy dome of the nearest hill, from which was the favorite outlook upon the surrounding panorama of valley, ravine, and mountain-side, and at the base of which lay the path from the hotel to the dense woodland beyond. Several rustic seats had been constructed on this hill, and on one of these Margaret was resting after her climb. Tunstall had thrown himself down on the turf, and was looking up at her rather than out on the various aspects of the landscape which she was indicating.

"But I'm afraid our scenery does not interest you," she said, pausing and smiling down on him.

"Oh, yes!" he answered quickly; "more than anything else in the world — at least, some of it that I have not beheld since you left Kentucky."

Her smile vanished instantly, and a tint of pink dawned in the light which to Tunstall seemed to radiate softly from her face, so luminously clear against its background of dark green foliage. Tunstall realized that he had been blunt and crude, and he flushed a little himself.

"Don't think that I meant to be flippant!" he begged, raising himself to a more erect and more rigid posture. "That speech was decidedly raw, but a worse objection to it, as I see it, is that it signified so little of what I did mean."

She was at ease again now, and her smile, more brilliant than before, had returned.

"Then let it stand," she said with determined lightness. "Surely it is only the speeches that mean things that need to be apologized for on such a morning as this."

"I shall not apologize for it," he went on, stubbornly refusing to fall into the mood she had assumed, "though it means much — much which I did not intend to say when I came up

here this morning, but which I did intend to say some time very soon, and which it has been my one purpose to say almost from the moment I first met you."

"Please, not now — not yet!" she pleaded, her face suddenly grave with apprehension and appeal.

"Don't ask me to restrain myself any longer," he answered almost fiercely. "I ought to have spoken before this. It was due to you. There are things which you should know, whatever your — your final attitude toward me may be. I want to explain them now, and then, if you insist, I shall go no further until I have your permission, if I am ever to have that."

"Perhaps I already know what you would explain," she said gently.

"No! no! You cannot. You may have heard something — anything. But you cannot have heard the truth. No one on earth knows that, except me and one other, whom you could never meet — who could not breathe the same air with you. You probably have heard that I once had a wife, that she proved false, that I secured a divorce. If that were all, or even the worst, I could face you now with less flinching.

All that is true as far as it goes, but *I* went much farther than that. I took the law of man and God into my own hands, and read it as only vengeance. Under that law of my own usurpation I set myself up as judge and executioner, and the penalty I exacted was the most terrible I could conceive. You shall see when I tell you what I have told no one else. It was — well, she was false, as I have said. I learned it suddenly. My first impulse was to kill her, to kill him. If they had had a million lives, I could have taken them all and still should not have been satiated. But death is too swift, too merciful. I wanted some punishment for them more in accordance with the crime they had committed. If I could have been sure of their tortures after death, if I could have devised and directed those tortures, I should have killed them — provided I had not thought of a punishment which to me seemed more horrible than any that could be inflicted in another world."

She was looking at him as one half unwilling to listen, yet intently held by what he was saying and by his strongly wrought manner. He thought he detected here a fleeting quiver of the eyelids, a slight shrinking from him, and

he paused. His hand closed with seeming unconsciousness on a tuft of grass, which he pulled from the ground; his eyes dully swept the horizon; then, returning to hers, blazed steadily with his purpose, as he continued:

"I did not kill them, but gave them the choice of dying or of living inseparably in their shame as husband and wife, in the city where they had always lived, among those who best knew their infamy. They chose the latter alternative, and paid the penalty to which I condemned them, he escaping it finally in death, and she facing it out to the end in the isolation and ostracism of a social outcast."

He desisted again, waiting as if for some word from her, but she gave none, her eyes falling beneath his scrutiny and resting on her hands, which she clasped a little convulsively in her lap.

"After the first few weeks I took no further interest in the case, and did nothing and would have done nothing to enforce the penalty I had pronounced upon them; but they were doubtless ignorant of that; and so, in the final balancing of the account between us, I suppose I must be credited with the execution of the full sentence.

"That is, in brief, my story. The part I played in it has never disturbed me in the least until recently — until I met you. Then, for the first time, I began to pay the penalty I had inflicted upon myself; for I began to realize that sometime I must tell you this story, and that, when told, it would place another and, perhaps, insuperable barrier between us; but, hardest of all, I realized that, remaining untold, it would be a still greater barrier between us."

He studied her face earnestly for some sign of her spirit toward him. It was a very serious face, a very sad face, with eyes fixed far beyond him on the distant mountain tops, but it was a face whose seriousness and sadness were as vague and uninterpretable as the mists which seemed to veil alike those mountain tops and the eyes that were drawn to them.

"I am not asking of you anything now," he went on, with a rough tension in his voice, "except that if it is possible, in the beauty and charity of your heart, you will not let the story I have told you bar me from your friendship entirely. Do not judge me irrevocably too hastily, too justly. Make some allowance for the fact that I am a man — a misshapen

abortion of a man — whose passions and shortcomings no woman — no woman like you — can fully understand. Judge me, if you can, with mercy instead of with justice."

Her eyes fell to him now, and there was something in their shadowy depths that recalled to him suddenly a look that he had seen only once before, in the eyes of his mother as she gazed so long for the last time upon his little face. There was something too in Margaret's voice which seemed to speak from her eyes as she answered simply:

"I shall not judge you. It is not for me to judge."

The words moved him for the moment beyond the power of reply. A little folded fan had slipped from her lap, and he caught it up in his two hands, bowing his head over it and kissing it.

"How like you!" he said gratefully. "But it was I who insisted that it was only for me to judge those two poor fools. Your very mercy is to that extent a condemnation."

He lifted his face to hers again and spoke with increased passion:

"And yet it is your mercy that I want. Do not withhold it. Give me a chance to redeem

myself. I know that I am selfish and base still in putting it in that way, but I am at least honest. My only chance is through you. There is not enough good in me to redeem me for its own sake. I want redemption simply because I want to be nearer you, with you, worthier of you."

A shadow of trouble brooded over her face as she rose to her feet.

"I think I have said all there is to say," she replied in her low, gravest voice. "I do not judge you, and I am still your friend."

He stood up beside her, stepping in front of her, to the path descending the hill.

"Don't go yet," he interposed. "I have not finished. You will listen to me?"

"Is — is it necessary? Is it best?"

"It is fair. You must hear me some time. It is fair, I think, that having said as much as I have, I should say more. Remember I am asking you nothing now except that you hear me. Won't you sit down again? I shall not detain you long."

She took the seat from which she had risen.

"Thank you," he said, standing above her, his hands awkwardly in his pockets. "I — well, I thought I had done with women before

I met you; then I knew I had never really begun with them. It has been bad for me, I fear, that I did not meet you long ago. It is only since I knew you that I have had any desire to be what such as you would call a decent man; that I have regretted my squandered years, my perverted energies. It is only since then that I have felt the sting, if not of conscience, of consciousness; that I have realized that while I have been called a strong man, I have been a weak one, swallowed by, instead of strangling, the demon of my rage, and throwing away my subsequent life because of the treachery of two weak creatures whom I had trusted. I should have been considered as weak as they if I had gone to the dogs of dissipation and self-destruction on account of their treachery; but, after all, it was dissipation that I plunged into — that of what we call practical politics — and in it I have almost accomplished moral self-destruction. My dissipation has been to make, for my personal pastime, sport of those things which men more deserving of your respect guard and cherish as the very foundations of our system of national existence and well-being. Nothing that I have done in all these years, though sometimes it

may have resulted for the good of others, has been done with that object, but only because the doing of it gave me occupation and proved my powers. I do not believe my political methods have been so bad that they would not be considered legitimate by the politicians generally, though some of them have not been such as I could explain to *you* with confidence of your approval. But do not think I am pleading repentance in my own behalf now — I fear I only repent because my sins have so widened the gulf between you and me — nor must you infer that I am claiming a complete eleventh-hour reformation. Even in my present political undertaking — the only one made from any higher motive than personal divertisement; the one in which I am enlisted earnestly, ardently because I would have something better than a wasted past to offer you — I must confess that I have employed some campaign tactics that I am not proud of when your eyes look into mine, and that would never be countenanced in his own interest by the splendid young fellow who is my opponent. I am trying to show you, not that I can ever be worthy of you, but that it is only through you that I have real-

ized how unworthy I am, or that I hope to be any worthier."

His voice had deepened and filled with a burden that retarded and finally seemed to weight it to a stop. He paused, his lips compressed, his steadfast gaze seeking to penetrate the curtains of her fallen lids. When they lifted a little after he ceased speaking, her eyes, sorrowful and compassionate, yet unrevealing that which he yearned most to see, looked frankly, unwaveringly into his.

He took a step toward her, throwing out his arm in a gesture of impetuous power, only to drop it again impotently at his side.

"Oh, if I could forget it all!" he cried,— "everything until I met you! And why not, if you will let me? Yes, why not? We live to-day, not yesterday. I never had a chance for life until I knew you. I want to begin over. I want to look forward and upward to— to you. I want to do, to be what is in me to do and be that will please you. I want to be different because I despise myself when I see myself as you must see me. I want to be different because I worship you. I want you to help me forget my past by forgetting as

much of it yourself as you can. A woman can forget much for the sake of a man who loves her as I do you; she cannot help forgetting it if there is in her own heart any response to his love. Can you? Will you? Ugh!" brushing his hand across his forehead with fierce impatience, "what am I raving? I love you, Margaret. Everything I have said or could say resolves itself to that. I promised not to ask of you anything now, and yet I am asking you all. But why not? If there is anything in the future for me, why not give it to me — or at least give me hope of it —now? I have gone so long without you — every hour before me is so long without you — if there is anything you can give me, Margaret, give it now."

He stood motionless, it seemed breathless, in his suspense, waiting for some sign, searching for it with eyes that might have burned it out of her inmost self.

She could not face their fire. Her head drooped, her bosom swelled, the glow that had warmed brow, cheeks, and neck faded slowly. Suddenly she raised her head and her eyes fluttered for a moment upon his. She spoke as one half frightened, wholly candid:

"Do not press me for an answer now. I cannot give it definitely. I — do not know myself yet."

It was as if his lungs had been suddenly filled with a salt gust from Northern seas. His lax form straightened, his chest distended, and his head was high in the invigorating gale. He looked at her in wordless exaltation. Abruptly the eyes which had not known tears since boyhood were wet. His throat heaved, and leaning over, he raised Margaret's hand to his lips.

"Thank God for this!" he said with almost inaudible depth of voice. "You have not yet cast me out!"

She moved to go now, and he, turning to descend the hill with her, was startled by the unwholesome face of a woman, made ghastlier by the heliotrope lining of the parasol thrown across her shoulder, and made more repulsive by the sneer on her lips and in her eyes. She was standing in the path below, looking up at Margaret and Tunstall. As he saw her, an inarticulate exclamation of astonishment, anger, and disgust escaped Tunstall, and he noticed, as Margaret glanced down to seek the cause of his exclamation, that the sneer on the

woman's face gave place to a forced smile, as she nodded and walked on toward the woods with a conventional —

"Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mrs. Knowles," he was amazed to hear Margaret kindly return.

XX

THE LIGHT THAT BLASTS

TUNSTALL'S jaws were clamped, and he did not speak until he was half-way down the hill, which he was descending with a savage desire to lengthen and quicken his stride far beyond the pace necessary to keep him by Margaret's side.

"You seem to know that woman," he finally said, with a new hardness in his voice.

"Who?" Margaret asked, as if aroused from a revery. "Oh! Mrs. Knowles?"

"Yes."

"Only as we know people at a place like this whom we speak to in passing and perhaps exchange a few commonplaces with occasionally."

"You are aware who she is, I suppose?"

"Beyond the facts that she is said to have an ugly past, that the guests here ignore her, and that she is evidently not at all happy, I know nothing of her."

"Then don't seek any closer intimacy with her. She is," pausing and turning with grim

visage to look for a moment at the retreating figure, "the woman I have been telling you of this morning."

There was a vivid transition from bewilderment to comprehension, incredulity, and pained concern on Margaret's face as she stared at him with wide eyes.

"Not—" she began, without the courage to finish.

"Yes. She was once Mrs. Morgan Tunstall."

"Oh!" in faint distress, half extending her hand to him with a timid impulse of sympathy, and as quickly withdrawing it, almost before he saw the gesture. "Forgive me, please."

"Forgive you?" a touch of ill-concealed tenderness in his tone. "For what? If I had something to forgive you for, I should feel that the distance between us, even by ever so little, was not so vast as it is."

They went on toward the hotel in silence, with a mutual recognition that it was now no time for words, she with thoughtful eyes downcast on the path in which she was walking, and he with high head and set face, blindly trampling the bending grass and weeds at her side.

He accompanied her to the steps leading up

to the hotel gallery, and in leaving her there made an effort to summon a conventionality in a natural voice.

"I think I shall go for a good tramp through the mountains before dinner," he said; "which route would you recommend?"

"The road to the left there is considered the most picturesque, I believe," she answered with a more successful assumption of normal ease than his own effort had been.

"Thank you," lifting his hat as he receded. "I hope I have not overtaxed you with too much exertion this warm morning?"

"No, indeed," she smiled. "I am not so frail as that."

He walked away, with an indifferent glance over the lawn, on which he recognized several people who knew him and who knew who Mrs. Knowles was. He laughed a little as he sneered in an undertone:

"Don't trouble yourselves to straighten your marshmallow faces, and don't be such hypocrites as to pretend you don't know that I know just what you have been puckering and side-glancing about, or that it makes a particle of difference to me whether you straighten or whether you pucker, or that it

really matters to you whether it makes any difference to me."

A man among them rose and sauntered toward him, as if to greet him; but Tunstall, not pausing, struck out into the road which Margaret had indicated.

"Hullo, Terry!" he called back, with a wave of the hand, in response to the man's salutation. "I'm off for a stroll. There are times for mountains and times for marshmallows; at present the mountains have it." Which Terry regarded as a poor sort of joke, whose point he could no more discover than he was expected to discover it.

It was a picturesque road, as Margaret Helm had intimated, though Tunstall might have been blind, so little did it impress him. He ploughed through the dust and crashed over the stones, no more conscious of them than he was of the rugged beauty around and above him. A short hour before he had risen out of his old self, out of the ashes of old faiths and the torpor of the old existence, and had caught again the unfolding vistas of a promised land of perennial blossom and fruitage that lay around a home of trust and truth,— a land that had first spread before him in the morning of his

youth and that had vanished, it had seemed forever, in his early manhood. How distinct and near it had drawn before him again to-day, as he had stood before Margaret Helm and at last, grappling the issue he had long contemplated and dreaded, looked into her clear eyes and revealed to her pure heart his past, with the purpose and hope he had dared build above it. And she had not repulsed him! She had not spurned him back into the rayless past from which her own self had lighted him, nor shut out from him forever the future to which his face was turned. She had simply said that she did not know her own heart. That meant that nothing was yet impossible for him; and to Tunstall the possible, once he set his will to it, was ultimately the actual. The moment he realized that Margaret Helm, knowing all, had not, as he expressed it, cast him out, had been a moment of awed ecstasy, in which his desires were hopes, all but fulfilled. It was in that crowning moment of promise of all that he longed for that there, in the path on the hillside, the incarnation of his past had suddenly stood before him in the tawdry figure of a woman, confronting her who was the incarnation of his future, interposing between

him and that future with all the theatric apposition of Chance and all the stern inexorableness of Fate. Grace Knowles and Margaret Helm here together! Grace Knowles and Margaret Helm speaking to each other, he between them! Grace Knowles rising before him the instant he stretched out his hand to Margaret Helm! Chance, Fate — whatever the accursed thing — was sardonic as well as theatric and stern.

He had been walking swiftly for perhaps half an hour when, following the course of the road, as he stepped out on a shelf of the mountain he was astonished to see rise before him, as the sea unexpectedly looms before one through a rift in a dense forest, the green knoll on which he had stood that morning with Margaret Helm. When he left the hotel, the road he had taken led away from rather than toward this knoll, yet here it was, apparently so near that it seemed as if he could almost leap from the ledge where he had now stopped to the very spot on which he had stood when he kissed Margaret Helm's hand. He realized, after a little, that the knoll must be nearly a mile away, yet so clear was the atmosphere that the path which the other woman had trod was a

sharply distinct scar, while on the rustic seat that Margaret had left was a bit of white which he knew must be Margaret's fan.

It had a potent magic — that bit of white — and instantly turned Tunstall's course and stayed the current of his mental chaos. It belonged to Margaret; he had seen it in her hand; he had seen it against her cheek; it was as if it were a part of Margaret; it had been forgotten, abandoned to the garish sun, to the coming rain, to the first chance wanderer who should ascend the hill. Tunstall, striding along this mountain road, bereft of objective aim, of rational equilibrium, suddenly gathered himself to one crystallized, becalming purpose. He would hasten to the little fragile thing that was Margaret Helm's; he would rescue it from the sport of the weather; save it from the hand, the eyes of a stranger. He would take it into his own keeping, as he had longed, with all that was tender and strong in him, to take Margaret herself. By such trifles as this is a man, even in the emotional stress of mountain solitudes, sometimes turned to lower and saner levels.

Tunstall looked about him for the nearest way by which he could reach the hill where

Margaret's fan was lying. To the left the road that he had been following veered farther and higher toward the ridge of the mountains which cut the sheer sky. A little beyond the ledge on which he was standing a narrow bridle-path branched from the road and led to the right and downward, through laurel and rocks, toward the forest beyond the hill. This path promised to take him at least in the vicinity of the hill, and instantly stepping into it he was swallowed up in the laurel.

Keeping to this path, he finally entered the stretch of forest which he knew skirted the hill he sought. Turning again to his right, he walked back along the rim of a ravine at the bottom of which a little brook romped. It must be the same brook he had seen winding at the foot of the hill that morning, and that being the case, his course was along the bank, up-stream.

He soon reached a road, and entering on this he had caught a glimpse of the hill through the trees, when he came upon a woman sitting on a boulder of the slope between the road and the stream.

She turned her head toward him as she heard his footsteps. At sight of her face Tunstall

stopped abruptly, his eyes blazing out beneath frowning brows. Mrs. Knowles sprang to her feet, with a faint exclamation of alarm, a real pallor heightening the incongruity of her artificial coloring.

The two gazed at each other mutely, the silence broken only by the gurgling brook and by a stone which, dislodged by Mrs. Knowles as she rose, rolled down the rocky declivity into the water.

It was but a few seconds that they stared at each other thus; then Tunstall turned contemptuously away and walked on toward the hill.

But he had not gone half a dozen yards when he whirled about and went back to Mrs. Knowles with determined stride, his face lowering ominously.

As he came toward her, Mrs. Knowles' skin mottled with conflicting tides. She took a step backward as if to retreat, but checked herself and gripping her parasol drove the rod into the ground, thus braced awaiting him. When he halted before her, there was even a flicker of defiance in her eyes.

"Why have you come here?" he demanded imperiously.

She did not reply at once. She had not yet won her struggle for self-control. But she did not flinch beneath his gaze.

"Why have you come here?" Tunstall repeated.

"I — why have *you* come here, Morgan Tunstall?" she retorted, with a boldness that was a little overdone.

"You are wasting time. You might as well answer at once. I intend to know what you are up to here."

"No, I am not wasting time." She even dared a sneering little smile. "If you had answered my question honestly, you would have answered the one you asked me."

"What do you mean?" impatiently.

"Oh! simply — but I don't know that I am accountable to you or anybody else."

"Why are you here? I shall not ask you again."

His face hardened into a cast which she had seen once before and which struck chill to her heart. Her hand went involuntarily to her breast as she quickly replied, still braving it out:

"I am here, Morgan Tunstall, for the same

reason that you are here — to be near Margaret Helm."

Tunstall leaned suddenly toward her, fury distorting his countenance, but instantly drew back in horror.

"Margaret Helm!" he cried. "Then, by God, you shall leave here at once!"

There was no more bravado in Mrs. Knowles now. She went to pieces as at one blow.

"Oh, no, no!" she pleaded. "Not that! Have you not done enough to me already? I will not go! I will not! You may murder me, but unless you do I will stay here as long as I please. Is n't there a spark of manliness in you somewhere? Margaret is the only being in the world I care for, and — and — oh, I do not see her much — just a few minutes, a few words with her a day, sometimes in two or three days. You need not fear that I shall ever tell her anything — indeed, indeed, I have not — I could not! Nothing could force me to tell her!"

"Tell her?" Tunstall exclaimed in harsh disgust. "She knows already. I have told her everything myself. Can't even you understand that you are not to see her any more — that I shall not allow it?"

There was no fear in Mrs. Knowles now. She took a swift step toward Tunstall with flashing eyes and quivering voice.

"You have told her! You have dared to tell her everything — about me — about the child? You have told her that she — that my daughter —?"

Tunstall looked into the waiting, questioning face blankly.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he answered curtly. "I did not know you had a daughter."

Her hands covered her cheeks and eyes. She laughed a little, hysterically. Then she sank in a huddle upon the boulder on which she had been sitting when Tunstall found her, and bowing her head on her knees, cried like a heart-broken child.

Tunstall, mystified, contemptuous, self-contemptuous, and impatient of the whole situation, waited in silence.

Mrs. Knowles' paroxysm passed quickly. She flung up her head and faced Tunstall again, indignantly but tearlessly.

"You did not know that I had a daughter!" she said with cutting intonation. "You who took it on yourself to prescribe my life — how

and where it should be spent! Where were your spies? They did n't earn their hire if they did n't tell you of my baby — of how her father slipped her from my side and sent her away to Virginia that she might grow up with another name, in ignorance of her own mother; of how during all the years of her childhood and girlhood I never saw her, never even heard of her except in an indirect way. And yet now that *he* is dead and I am free to go where I please, and I come here, not to breathe a word of the secret to Margaret — nothing could make me do that — but just to be where she is and talk to her sometimes, and maybe get her to talk to me sometimes, about the — the things that any mother has a right to know, you would even forbid me that. But I tell you now you can't intimidate me any longer. You may do what you choose, but you can't drive me away from here. Only Margaret Helm herself can prevent me seeing her."

Tunstall, observing the woman closely, began to question her sanity.

"This sort of raving is altogether pointless," he answered coldly. "I was not aware that you had a daughter, but because you have, and she has not been allowed to know you, is

no reason why you should impose yourself on Miss Helm. It is not worth while bandying words about it, but I shall not permit you to annoy Miss Helm any more."

Mrs. Knowles slowly rose and confronted Tunstall with white lips.

"You find it hard to realize," she said in low, bitter challenge, "that I shall no longer look to you for permission, don't you? And you find it hard to reconcile yourself to any acquaintance between me and the girl you are in love with, don't you?"

"Stop! No more of that!"

Tunstall did not move, but he gave his order in a voice which Mrs. Knowles once would have instantly heeded.

"What do you know," she went on, without faltering, "of this girl you are in love with? She is too good for you or any other man — you seem to understand that — and you are horrified at the thought of my even seeing her or speaking to her. How are you going to comfort yourself when I tell you the truth, which you can easily verify for yourself, that Margaret Helm — that you, *you*, Morgan Tunstall, are in love with, of all women in the world, Margaret Helm, *my daught* — "

With a guttural snarl muffled in his throat Tunstall leaped as if to choke Mrs. Knowles, but her quick cry of terror or his own timely impulse stayed his outstretched arm, and he recoiled from her without touching her, rubbing his arrested hand again and again in a dazed way on his coat-sleeve, and muttering over and over, as he turned his back on her and groped his way up to the road:

"She lies, Lord God! She lies, Lord God!"

XXI

LEVEL WITH THE EARTH

HE stumbled on deep into the forest, following the flow of the brook more by its sound than by any guidance of his eyes, which stared blankly before him. Of cognition, thought, reason there was in him no consistent train. He was dominated by the murmur of the brook, swelling, receding; laughing, moaning; grieving, mocking; demoniacally reminiscent, desolately prophetic. It was the murmur of his own chaotic brain.

After nearly an hour's purposeless tracking of the stream, as he stopped before a cliff against whose base the brook impotently beat and petulantly doubled, he was still absently rubbing against his coat-sleeve the hand that had almost clutched Mrs. Knowles' throat.

He looked about him with intelligence for the first time. Blocking the course he had been following, the cliff towered over him, its seamed sides patched with mats of vines and

gripped by the desperate roots of stunted trees. Away from the cliff stretched the thick woods through which the brook had cut its course, and at his feet shot up the straight trunk of a pine. Overhead in its branches, softer yet more distinct than the brawl of the water, was the song of the forest. Tunstall, as one awakening from sleep, drew in a long breath of the resinous fragrance, and lying down on the carpet of pine-needles, stretched prone upon his face.

Level with the earth — his once fierce passions, his strong will, his sustaining belligerence, his grasp of power, his daring new desires and hopes. It was a moment of utter, humble prostration of a man who had always been self-sufficient; and he who had trampled on the world when it was in his way knew no rebellion now as he felt that his place was, as here, on the ground, beneath the world's feet.

He lay there minutes, hours, motionless. Gradually the tumult of his brain subsided, and he began to consider, with some degree of calmness, the revelation made to him by Mrs. Knowles and its full significance to himself. Margaret Helm the daughter of Grace Knowles! Margaret Helm, the one woman who meant his

self-redemption, his restoration to faith, love, life, the child of the one woman who had shut him out from all these, of the one woman on whom he had worked the extremity of his vengeance! Could the fleering tyranny of Destiny, Chance, of Law, of God — of whatever the power that directs or neglects the fortunes of men — be more grimly manifested than in his doom to find that the possibility of all that he had missed, all that was worth living for, was through the love of one who owed her very existence to the woman who had done most to destroy him and whom in turn he had done most to destroy? Revolt as he might at the thought that so lovely a flower as Margaret Helm had sprung from such muck, the aspect of Mrs. Knowles' disclosure which now most crushed Tunstall was that which bore on himself rather than on Margaret. She did not know, she must never know; but he knew now, and his knowledge was a barrier between them as insuperable as infinity and as lasting as eternity. Of all created beings, aside from Mrs. Knowles herself, Margaret Helm was the one whom he could not now ask to accept his love. The nobler, the worthier of the highest love she

might be, the wider was he sundered from her.

It did not occur to Tunstall to doubt the revelation which Mrs. Knowles had made. The very improbability of the thing — almost its inconceivability except in truth — was in itself instantaneous conviction. As an invention it would have been so preposterous, so readily disproved, that it would never have been offered or even harbored. Mrs. Knowles, had she been of weaker intellect than she was, could not have been so foolish as to fabricate such a story. Sometime, Tunstall vaguely conceded himself, he might go to the Virginia town that was Margaret Helm's home and make a quiet investigation of the facts on his own account; though there was not even a vague concession that such an investigation was necessary. But this point was now of no interest, however remote. He did not question Mrs. Knowles' truthfulness in this instance, but if he had done so the ultimate effect on himself and on his future could have been little different. Whether or not Margaret Helm was Mrs. Knowles' daughter, the now recognized possibility that he might have met and loved her daughter snuffed out the light of the new world to which

he had set his face with the coming of Margaret. And the purer, the juster, the more charitable, the more lovable — the more like Margaret — such a daughter might be, the blacker the darkness in which he must be left. Assuming, for idle assumption's sake, that Margaret might not be Mrs. Knowles' daughter, yet in her own innocent girlhood she represented, incarnated, all that he had irreparably wronged in Mrs. Knowles' daughter, — all that must forever exclude him from the gladly, proudly loving heart of such girlhood.

Turning these things over fitfully in his still reeling mind, groping feebly on the bottom, along the walls, of the abyss into which he had fallen, sure, in his inward shadows, of his mental results without perception of any erratic indefiniteness and incompleteness of his mental methods whose force a different and grosser mind might have felt, Tunstall's efforts at reasoning and his conclusions have not been inadequately indicated here, however uneven may seem their logic or their lucidity when presented to the different mind in the uncompromising fixity of the printed page.

When finally he turned his stiffened body and slowly lifted himself to his feet, night had

settled over the forest. The invigorating coolness of the high altitude was in the air. The cliff was a bank of dense gloom. The thick foliage seemed to gather and imprison, as under a vast dome, the darkness, intensified by a narrow rift here and there through which the sky was visible. Above Tunstall the great pine, every breath of its sighing under-song now hushed, was as stirless as if hewn from the rock of the cliff, loomed high beyond the shades of the forest and blossomed apparently with white, still mountain stars.

Tunstall peered inquisitively around him. He did not know where he was, how far away or in what direction was the hotel. He remembered that he had come here a long time ago, when it was daylight, though he had noted no more of his way or its surroundings than if it had been as dark as now. The sound of the brook still beat upon him — the one thing that was familiar; that had not changed; that linked the night with the morning, so long passed; that seemed to have gone on since he could not remember, that seemed must go on till he could not forget. He recalled that he had followed that sound all through the woods that day; he knew that wherever the hotel was, it

was toward the head of this brook, and that therefore the stream that had led him here would guide him back.

He set forth up its course. For the first time in many hours he now had some definite object in view: he was walking with some purpose, making his way to some place. It was a poor enough object — merely to get back to the hotel which he now loathed — but it was an object, and in a degree relaxed the subjective strain that had been upon him. Beating in the darkness through the briars and underbrush toward that object, was as effective to reawaken his normal senses as was the object itself.

Soon — and sooner than he had thought possible, for it seemed to him that he had traversed many leagues in descending the stream that day — he reached the road which, as the forest began to grow thinner, he recognized as the road he had turned into that morning after descending the mountain bridle-path. He knew that the edge of the woods, and beyond that the hotel, were near now. A little further along he passed the spot where he had seen Grace Knowles. He felt a chill sensation as if his body were contracting and shrinking into himself. Involuntarily his chin fell to his

sunken chest, and he automatically drew his coat closer about him. It was a place of the dead and damned. His own sudden death, and his dead self yet down there, were vividly real things.

Emerging from the woods a few minutes later, the lights of the hotel shining across to him smote him with a shock of repellent inapposition. It was as if he were suddenly thrown back on a world he had left but a moment before, though he had lived through centuries since he left it. Black as was the doom back there in the forest, yet he had less heart for the world of those hotel lights, and he paused for a second as if actually to retrace his steps. But it was only for a second, and walking on toward the hotel, he came to the hill which he had ascended that morning with Margaret Helm. He stopped again, with a repressed groan. All the beauty of the ascent, the splendor of the summit, the desolation of the descent rushed upon him in a flood. Then again came the vision from the mountain, as he had looked down on the hill and discovered Margaret's fan. A returning wave of the old tenderness that had hurried him down the mountain-side to secure the fan swept over

him, with a momentary pang that he had neglected, forgotten it so long in his own self-concern.

With quickening steps he climbed the knoll, curious, even anxious, to see whether the fan were still there. He found it lying on the seat where Margaret had left it, and where he had seen it from the shelf of the mountain later. He dropped into the seat, and taking up the little fan contemplated it reflectively. Then bowing his face into his hands, the fan pressed against his cheek, his elbows supported by his knees, he lived over the drama of the morning that had been enacted on this spot, recalling every word of Margaret's, every intonation, every change of the sensitive face. And it was only that morning that all this had happened — only that morning, ages and ages ago, in another world, another life.

He sat up after a while, and gently placing the fan in his pocket, looked across to where the dim ridge of the mountains melted into the star-sprinkled sky. Nearer, below him, his eyes fell to the lights of the hotel, and he caught on the fitful breeze of the night an occasional wave of a waltz from the ball-room, or a faint ripple of laughter from the galleries.

In another hour the music had ceased, the ball-room was dark, and other lights twinkled in the upper story; these, too, gradually died away, and when Tunstall finally rose and began the descent of the hill, the building was sleeping in the hush and shadow of the mountains.

As he walked toward it and its outlines took form before him, he looked up to the unlighted windows, and he found himself wondering, as he had wondered on his arrival the night before, which of those windows were Margaret Helm's. He pulled his hat over his eyes, with an aching stricture in his throat. He was never to know, the thought crushed in on him — he was never to know, or to concern himself to know, anything more about Margaret Helm. All that, with everything else, was in the past now.

He made his way to his room and without undressing threw himself across the bed. He did not sleep, and as he lay there in the stillness and under the same roof that covered Margaret, the feeling of her hopeless nearness was so poignant that he got up with the first flush of dawn and went down to the hotel office.

"You have some saddle-horses here, have you not?" he asked the clerk.

"Oh, yes, sir!"

"Let me look at the best of them."

"Yes, sir. You are out early."

Horses were shown him and he made a selection.

"How much do you want for this one?" he inquired.

"Do you mean by the hour?"

"I mean I wish to buy him."

"Oh, I could n't say, sir!" the surprised clerk stared. "I 'd have to see the manager."

"Then see him at once, please."

The manager was seen, the sale was made, and Tunstall, having scribbled a conventional line of leave-taking on his card for the ladies, was in the saddle, with the first conscious breath of the bracing morning air in his long constricted lungs. In his youth a horseback ride had always been his resort in time of trouble, and the possibility of returning to Kentucky on a good horse over the mountain roads, instead of in the stuffy railroad train, no sooner suggested itself to him than he seized it as a reality.

With one fleeting glance at the still sleeping

windows of the hotel, he turned his face to the silvering crest of the range and galloped away. The vigorous swing of the horse into the majestic solitude of the morning put new strength into Tunstall's own body and spirit, and not once did he look back.

XXII

THE MORNING OF THE CONVENTION

IT was the morning of the district convention. Sidney Garrard, in his little room in the crowded Bracebury hotel, was awakened at 5.30, in accordance with his instructions left with the clerk the night before. The boy pounded noisily at the door before Garrard answered, for it had been 3 o'clock when the conference of his friends in the Garrard headquarters on the first floor of the hotel had broken up and he had climbed wearily to his bedroom.

He did not get up at once, but lay staring at the slit of a window, against which a foggy rain was beating. Beyond that the gray gloom of the morning was impenetrable, except for a few feet, within which the dripping branches of a linden tree swayed and thrashed against the weatherboarding of the hotel. The rain rattled in gusts on the shingle roof, the water gushed and thumped in the tin gutters, and near Garrard's bed there was a tap, tap on the

bare floor as the slow drops fell from a wet spot in the plastered ceiling. It was not a cheerful beginning of the day to which Garrard had looked forward so long and whose outcome, which he had exerted himself so strenuously to control, meant so much for him.

Nor was there any inward source of cheer in Garrard, now that he had made his fight and awaited the result. He lay there, in the reaction which comes after one's utmost effort has been put forth without having attained the result whose possibility had been his stimulus. Moreover, he was in the semi-torpor that sometimes follows an untimely awakening from sleep and submerges one in a depressing revulsion from the very thought of resuming the activity and struggle of the waking hours which have worn most on mind and body. For the time Garrard, free as he usually was from morbidness, felt the oppression of the day and of defeat. He did not care to get up. It did not seem that he should ever care. There is something to keep a man going when he is making his fight, but when it is made and lost a dry bed on a wet morning is about as good as is left for him.

But Garrard's unfavorable political prospect,

bad as that seemed, was not what oppressed him most at the moment. It was his conviction that the distance between Margaret Helm and himself, if not widening, at least was not lessening. It was true he felt that she respected him more and liked him better than she had done during the first summer of their acquaintance, and it was true that since then, until this year, he had seen nothing of her; but he had seen enough recently to feel sure that she did not yet wish to listen to what he most wished to say to her. Once, indeed, he had been on the verge of saying it again, just before she left for the West Virginia mountains, and she had so delicately yet so positively indicated to him that he would make a mistake if he did speak that he had immediately desisted. While this had keenly disappointed him, it had not in itself discouraged him, nor would he have been so near despondency this morning if he had not felt that to win he must overcome an opponent more formidable than Margaret herself. If his contestant had been any man he knew except Morgan Tunstall, Garrard would have been more hopeful. In a vague sense he had somehow conceived that Tunstall was his dangerous rival as long ago

as the day when Margaret had first seen the portrait at Tunstall Paddocks, and since Tunstall's actual appearance on the field, handicapped though he might be by his unhappy divorce, Garrard, while as determined and aggressive in love as he was in politics, could not help feeling at a distinct disadvantage in opposing him. From Garrard's boyhood Tunstall had always made on him an impression of power that at first had almost the effect of awe, and that was not lacking later when he found that it was Tunstall whom he must meet as his chief antagonist in the two battles that he thought most worth winning.

What other man but Tunstall, for instance, could have made the political campaign that he had made this summer, and yet have spent most of his time with Margaret Helm? Who but Tunstall, with the result of that campaign so close as it was known to be, would have run off to the mountains and loafed at a watering-place the last days preceding the convention without losing, but actually gaining, ground in his political race meantime? Garrard was well aware that while he was doing some of his hardest campaign work these last days, Tunstall had gone to Margaret. Tunstall himself

before leaving had told Garrard of his destination, and had laughingly advised him that he had "better come along." Here it was the morning of the convention, and Tunstall, to the consternation of some of his supporters, had not even appeared at Bracebury. But Garrard had built no hopes on that fact: he knew Tunstall too well, and he knew too well Tunstall's strength in the convention.

Tunstall had undoubtedly gained materially since the Luttroll County Convention. The proceedings of that body, as reported by the correspondent of the *Globe*, had resulted in an uninstructed delegation to the district convention at Bracebury, both Tunstall and Garrard being well represented by friends among the delegates. So close was the race in the rest of the congressional district that it was confidently assumed by the Tunstall and Garrard workers alike that the vote of the Luttroll County delegation in the district convention would either effect a nomination or produce a dead-lock. Garrard and his friends had done what they could in the interval between the two conventions to increase his strength in the Luttroll delegation, and they believed, up to the night preceding the district convention,

that they had won enough of the undecided delegates to give Garrard a majority of the delegation. They were dumbfounded, therefore, when, on the night before the district convention was to assemble, the various county delegations holding separate meetings for the purpose of organizing and agreeing on their committeemen, the Luttroll delegation was controlled on every vote by the Tunstall men, who not only dictated its organization, but declared that its vote should be cast as a unit on all questions in the convention. This programme, if carried out, would stifle every Garrard man on the delegation and would in effect throw all the votes of the delegation for Tunstall and insure his nomination. It was an old trick, and one that had been successfully played many a time before by politicians less shrewd than Tunstall. Garrard and his lieutenants knew, and admitted among themselves, that unless this scheme could be frustrated they were beaten. With every member of the Luttroll delegation voting for his choice in the convention, there was a bare possibility that Tunstall in the end might not hold a decisive number of Poindexter's following and that Garrard might win; with the delegation vot-

ing as a unit for Tunstall, there was no chance at all for Garrard. At the conference of the Garrard men immediately after the action of the Luttroll delegation there was but one opinion as to the course that was left them. They must make their fight in the convention against the "unit rule." Their only hope lay in having the convention refuse to accept Luttroll County's vote as a unit, but insist that the delegation be polled and the votes be recorded as cast by the individual delegates. It was a desperate hope, they realized, for even if they should succeed in having the vote of Luttroll County excluded on the question of recognizing or rejecting the unit rule, the probability of securing its rejection by a majority of the other delegates was very slight. It was clearly the Tunstall plan to make sure of the nomination by the enforcement of the unit rule, and if the convention should determine against its enforcement it would only be because Tunstall could not control his delegates and those of Poindexter on that question. But Garrard's friends admitted that there was scant encouragement in counting on Tunstall's inability to do that. Tunstall had never been the man to fail in such a coup

as this. It belonged essentially to the field of practical politics of which he was a master.

It was true that Tunstall had not yet appeared at Bracebury. That was looked on in Garrard's camp as singular, though not significant of any fatal disadvantage to Tunstall's side. Tunstall was in the habit of doing singular things in a political fight, and he had never been known to lose by such tactics. Nevertheless it was understood at Garrard's headquarters that some of Tunstall's managers were not as unconcerned over his absence as they professed to be; that Poindexter in particular was secretly fuming about it; and that Dunk Peabody, having taken a few drinks to allay his agitation on the subject, had become so boisterously agitated that some of the diplomatic Tunstall workers had to get him "dead drunk" in order to quiet him.

That was the situation as developed by the preceding night, and as it recurred to Garrard looking out from his room on the rainy morning of the district convention.

He lay there until he heard a clock strike seven, and Hugh Letcher, pushing open the door a few minutes later, found him still in bed.

"What! not even up yet?" he said in surprise. "I've been expecting you downstairs for an hour. It's the late bird that catches last year's nest."

"Oh, well, old man," Garrard replied sluggishly, rising to a seat on the edge of the bed, "I did n't see any reason to hurry. The game's up, and I'm tired of the whole thing."

"What's the rub? It always did upset you to lose much sleep. It's not like you not to put in your hardest licks when the other fellow seems surest of licking you."

"I need a good cold bath, Hugh," Garrard answered, a little apologetically, as he began to dress, "or a good kicking. Don't be so easy with me; try a kick or two. I'll be down in a minute and do what's to be done. Not much, is it?"

"I ran across a fellow this morning you might do something with. His name is Hull —Dorsey Hull — one of Poindexter's men. He says he can't vote for you, but that it does look like you ought to have a square deal and be allowed your votes in the Luttroll delegation. I believe if you will have a talk with him you can get him to vote against the unit rule."

"All right. Hull, did you say his name was?"

"Yes. Says he remembers you well, and has always had a sort of pity for you ever since he cut you out with Bessie Floyd."

"Bessie Floyd," Garrard smiled musingly. "Yes, I did know a girl once named Bessie Floyd. Let me see: it was the summer I drove that *Dictator* filly. You remember her, don't you?"

"Miss Floyd?"

"That filly. She was a good one. It was n't anything to step over into Magowan County behind her. Bessie Floyd lived in Magowan, you know. Hull — Hull — yes, I believe there was a chap of that name hanging around Bessie that summer. So he got her, did he? Well, I 'll go and inquire about her and that other little matter. Anything turned up this morning?"

"Tunstall has n't. Even Driggs is beginning to seem a little rattled, and Poindexter does n't look as if he could contain himself much longer. He is clearly getting desperate and has taken to dissipating on ice-water. He exhausted the supply in the hotel office early. And, oh, by the way, I 've a letter from Florence this morning. She said that Tunstall had come up there, but remained only a day. What do you think now?"

"Oh, nothing; except that Tunstall will be on hand if he is needed, and that he is not likely to be needed. He left his machine in such good order that it will do its work without him. What racket is that downstairs, do you suppose? Hello, Nix, what's all that noise?" the last question being addressed to Bob Nixon, who came into the room at the moment.

"Here! what are you fellows loafing up here for?" Nixon asked. "That noise? Why, don't you know? That is Dunk Peabody and a few of his fellow statesmen celebrating the good news: they've heard from Morgan Tunstall."

"What have they heard?" Hugh Letcher inquired.

"That he has reached Yardley on horseback and will be here by the two o'clock train. Dunk was at breakfast when the glad tidings found him, and he immediately transferred himself to the hotel office. He is now standing on the clerk's desk, with a napkin under his chin and an unfurled table-cloth in his hand. That which you hear downstairs is Dunk breakfasting on plutocrats."

XXIII

"THE OLD HICKORY OF LUTTROLL"

THE convention met at ten o'clock, and when it adjourned for dinner two hours and a half later Sidney Garrard's assertion that Tunstall's machine would do its work without Tunstall's presence had been demonstrated. The Tunstall-Poindexter combination had held together and had carried every point raised.

The first test of strength came on the question of temporary organization. The vote was close, but the Tunstall selection for Temporary Chairman won. With their power thus shown and the organization and administration of the convention thus seized, Tunstall's adherents regarded the nomination of their man as assured, while at heart Garrard's supporters, though still maintaining a bold front, conceded that, unless some totally unexpected development should favor them, they were beaten. They made an obstinate struggle against the unit rule, but lost by only two or three less votes

than they lost the temporary chairmanship. After that they offered no resistance to the opposition's motion to adjourn until two o'clock. They understood that Tunstall's train was due at two o'clock, but they agreed with Garrard now that Tunstall's absence or presence would not change the final result. The Tunstall machine had been shown to be in perfect order.

On reassembling in the afternoon, the Chairman's gavel rapping a few minutes after the whistle of the two o'clock train had resounded through the hall, the business before the convention was the placing in nomination of the various candidates for Congress. A call of the counties of the district was begun alphabetically. When Bascom County was reached, Hoard, a square-jawed, big-nosed young member of the delegation, arose and made the nominating speech for Sidney Garrard with such earnest force, such a plain exposition of the methods employed against him, such a telling repudiation of the "husks of Bourbonism" on which the Tunstalls and Poindexters would nourish the party, and such a fervid plea for the courage and sturdiness of Garrard's stand for a living Democracy and for the manly representation of its vitality instead of a crafty reli-

ance on its prejudices and spoils, that the Garrard delegates were aroused to an uproarious demonstration of reddening faces, straining throats, and tossing banners, which continued several minutes. When this finally subsided and the call of the counties was resumed, Croxton County furnished the next speaker, who seconded Garrard's nomination. It was seconded again before Hardesty, one of "the Pocket" counties, was reached and "the honey-lipped orator of old Hardesty" presented the name of Leonidas Cox Poindexter to the convention, which was received with some honest applause by the Pocket delegations, joined in rather perfunctorily by the Tunstall counties.

At last Luttroll County was called, and the Tunstall delegates had their cue. Luttroll was to propose the name of Tunstall, the nominating speech having been assigned to "the Old Hickory of Luttroll," Shelby Letcher. When the reading clerk sang out resonantly, "The County of Luttroll," the Tunstall men on the convention floor and platform sprang to their feet with the promptness of a drill team and began the din for which they had been waiting their opportunity. Yells, tin horns, pounding chairs and canes, made a clamor that was bar-

baric and that was maintained with a persistence betraying more method than spontaneity. Flags were drawn from many places of concealment and waved overhead; sheets of canvas bearing Tunstall's portrait were hung out, and streamers with Tunstall mottoes and catchwords were flaunted. After a while the standards of the Tunstall counties were wrenched from their places and borne aloft, while behind them the Tunstall delegates fell in line and, still keeping up their noise, began to march and countermarch through the hall; most conspicuous among these standards being that of Luttroll County, clutched in the frenzied hands of Dunk Peabody as he was carried around the room on the shoulders of some of his colleagues. None of the usual features of the modern convention demonstration was omitted. The Garrard men remained in their seats through it all, some of them resigned, others smiling patiently, and still others jeering goodnaturedly. They knew that this was a part of the programme which would have to run its prescribed course, and that it would be timed by the watch until it well exceeded the length of the Garrard demonstration. They also knew that it would not make a vote for Tunstall,

though there was no comfort in that, as they knew at the same time that it was not necessary to make any more votes for Tunstall.

Finally, after the hurly-burly had been protracted for thirteen minutes, that greeting Garrard's name having lasted about five, even the Tunstall men began to realize that, as one of them expressed it to another, there was "a cog loose somewhere." There were now gaps in the "enthusiasm," as if the enthusiasts felt that they had done their part and were disposed to subside in order that the next part, which was not theirs, should be done. They began to look around for Shelby Letcher, to note that he was not in any of the seats assigned to the Luttroll delegation, and that he was not to be discovered on the platform or elsewhere in the hall. Even the Chairman now banged the table and turned to see if the expected speaker had yet reached the stage. Cries of "Letcher!" soon dominated the other noises in the building, and some of the Garrard men, though not understanding the hitch, were laughing outright.

At last there was a sudden, genuine cheer from the Tunstall followers, as the gaunt form of Shelby Letcher was seen to emerge from

the wings of the stage and with awkward slowness make its way to the table by the Chairman's side.

Standing there until the din was stilled, "the Old Hickory of Luttroll" began to speak in a harsh but unstrained voice that carried every syllable to all parts of the auditorium:

"Mr. Chairman and Fellow Democrats," he said, "I must inform you at the outset that I am here to make a very different speech from that which you expected from me, and which you had a right to expect from me. Just how and why I am not to make the speech I intended to make and am to make the speech I shall try to make, I hardly know myself. It has all come about so suddenly, and I am so far at this moment from fully grasping the entire situation in all its cause and effect, that I seriously doubt if I should not have acquitted myself with more credit by remaining mute in my seat. But, gentlemen, I am a Democrat who never shirks a duty to his party, and in the brief time I have had to ponder on that duty and the imperfect light I have had in which to find it, I believe that it is to the interest of the Democracy of this district that I should say to you what I stand here now to say.

"Gentlemen, when I came to this convention this afternoon I came with the expectation, which I have since been compelled to abandon, of placing in nomination for the office of Representative in Congress from this district the name of the man I believed, and still believe, to be the choice of a majority of the members of our party." (At this there was a subdued commotion throughout the hall, growing louder as feet were shuffled and delegates pressed nearer the rostrum, while their questions as they asked one another what it meant were mingled with ejaculations which were not chosen with a view to elegance of expression.)

"Be patient, all of you, if you would hear what I have undertaken to tell you," the old gentleman resumed, extending a hand and a long arm over his auditors authoritatively. "Fellow Democrats, without beating around the bush I will make a long story short by saying to you that, for personal reasons of his own, which, whatever they may be, we must concede to be, in the judgment of him whom they most concern, good and sufficient, the man who I am morally certain would have been declared their nominee by a majority of the delegates to this convention has changed his mind and has

determined to retire from politics." (There was another commotion here, more vigorous than the first, but shorter, in the convention's eagerness to lose no word of the speaker's.) "So it is my unwelcome function, Democrats of Kentucky, to come before you at the urgent and repeated solicitation of the Hon. Morgan Tunstall himself and, in his behalf, not only to inform you that he refuses to allow his own name to be placed in nomination, but that it is his desire that, instead, I shall second the nomination of the Hon. Sidney Garrard."

The effect of this announcement, according to the report published in next morning's *Globe*, was "hard to describe. Consternation was plainly written in the ranks of the Tunstall delegates, whose tense faces, lifted upward to the aged speaker, broke into an agitated sea of dismay, perplexity, incredulity, disgust, astonishment, and anger, from which sounded sharp exclamations, muttered oaths, and here and there a groan and an unmistaken hiss. The Garrard forces were scarcely less a study. As they took in the significance of the thunderclap from the stage, they responded with a spontaneous cheer, but it was short and seemed to die away in doubt. They looked into one another's

eyes and found not answers to their questioning, but questions similar to their own — What does it mean? Is it a trick? The most vivid and violent part of the scene, however, was in that portion of the hall occupied by the delegates from the Pocket. These were all supporters of Poindexter, and they did not try to conceal their fury at what they considered Tunstall's betrayal of his ally from the Pocket. Every man of them was on his feet — and his feet usually on the bottom of the chair on which he had been sitting — and with distorted face was hooting and howling out his passion. The air was thick with doubled fists and cries of 'Take him out!' 'Traitor!' 'What did he get?'" etc.

But it was not long before the tumult subsided, at least temporarily. Shelby Letcher was waiting to proceed with his remarks, and curiosity to hear what else remained to be said did far more to restore order than the energetic efforts of the Chairman did.

"I am here," Mr. Letcher went on, his voice seeming to have gathered some of the excitement with which the hall was now charged, "unwillingly to fulfil the commission that has been imposed upon me. In withdrawing the

name of Mr. Tunstall from this canvass, I speak for him alone; in seconding the nomination of Mr. Garrard, I speak for Mr. Tunstall and for myself. Mr. Tunstall wishes me to assure you that he regrets that the campaign proceeded so far before he determined to quit it; that he is grateful for the loyal support he has received at the hands of so many of you, and that he deplores the wasted exertions which he induced you to put forth so generously in his behalf; nevertheless, he particularly wishes me to assure you that his decision to go no further in the matter is absolute and final. And knowing the man as I do, I can further assure you — if it were necessary to make any such assurance to those knowing him as you do — that there can be not the remotest question of his sincerity.

"So much for that part of my duty. I have discharged it with reluctance, for I believe that Morgan Tunstall is the ablest leader of our party in Kentucky, and I earnestly desired his election to Congress this fall, both because it would have been for the signal honor and advantage of our district to have such a representative at Washington and because I wished to see him take the place in the

direction of our national legislation and in the councils of our national party to which his commanding gifts and accomplishments so pre-eminently entitle him.

"The second part of my duty — the indorsement of the candidacy of the Hon. Sidney Garrard — I also discharge with some reluctance. It is well known that, neighbor and friend as he is, — even almost as a son, — it was with pain that I have withheld my support from him in this campaign. Frankly I thought he could wait; that it would be better for him if he had to wait. All of us have our shortcomings, and his are to be charged to the impulsiveness of an honest and courageous youth. He will get over his youth, my friends, and with his courage and honesty left him, added to the soberer temperament and the broadening experience of his increasing years, he will yet make an all-wool Democrat. As you are aware, there are some things in his record which I do not like, but I have suggested to you their explanation, and we surely can well afford to bear with a young Democrat whose divergence from the plummet line of the Fathers is due to his effort to stand so straight that he is sometimes a little sway-backed. With all

his faults I believe, and the great chieftain whose name I have just withdrawn from this convention believes with me, that Sidney Garrard is the most available man for the party now to unite on. At this stage of threatening party break-up and realignment in Kentucky," he continued, with oratorical confusion of metaphors, "we cannot afford to invite needless dissensions. Three men have made this contest for Congress. One of them has voluntarily withdrawn. Two remain in the race. Our choice should be one of these. It would be folly to inspire the resentment of their adherents by going beyond these two, at this late hour, to select a candidate who has known nothing of the brunt of the battle. No man in this district has stancher, more zealous friends than Sidney Garrard. Shall we wantonly slap them in the face now — after his chief competitor has retired in his favor — by going into the woods and bushes for a dark horse? That would be a poor way to unite the party, when Morgan Tunstall's action really leaves no obstacle to party union. Gentlemen, you must know that the nominee of this convention will be Garrard or Poindexter. I know, and you must know, that, as by far the stronger candi-

date, rallying to his standard even with Tunstall in the field almost enough delegates to nominate him, Garrard will be that nominee. Because, therefore, Morgan Tunstall, who had practically won this nomination, thinks it should go to this gallant young leader; because by his remarkable fight against stupendous odds he is entitled to this honor over any opponent that might now seek to lift the lance dropped by the peerless Tunstall; because he is clearly the second choice of the Democrats of this district, who are not to have their first choice; because he is the son of my county, whose heretofore divided allegiance now centres on him; because he is my neighbor and one of my boys whom, with God's help and your help, I intend to live to make as rock-ribbed a Democrat as I am myself; and most important of all, because he is now the one man in this district who can best insure the harmony and invincibility of our glorious old party in this campaign, I second the nomination of Sidney Garrard, of the county of Luttroll."

XXIV

MORGAN TUNSTALL DECIDES HIS FUTURE

TUNSTALL'S decision to withdraw from the race and throw his influence to Garrard had been made only that morning, on the train from Yardley to Bracebury. His horseback ride through the mountains had been a distraction from thought. The rough and often perilous roads, the changing scene, the almost continuous objective demands on his mind, the deep sleep in some humble cabin after a long day in the saddle, left him little opportunity for reflection, even had he desired it. But he had no such desire. His one purpose was to escape reflection, to get away from the spot, and all its associations, where the blow had fallen upon him. No mind could stand many days such as that through which he had passed after his morning with Margaret Helm and Grace Knowles. He fled, as a wounded animal flees, homeward; though but for his knowledge that there was unfinished work for him

in that direction, he soon might have drifted anywhere, instead of keeping to his course. The one definite conception that took shape in his mind, when there was room there for anything beyond the agony and despair of those first hours after he had been struck down, was that back in Kentucky he had set his hand to work which yet remained to be completed, and to that he turned like an automaton. There was nothing else for him to turn to.

Yet, when he had put the mountains behind him and had reached the rolling meadows of his own county, every familiar landmark seemed to oppress him with a new distaste for the work to which he was going back. When he had left for the mountains, that work had been infused with his own life blood, and he had given to it the best of his vitality because by it he would lay a stepping-stone into the new world that Margaret Helm's coming had opened before him. But now, returning to take up his work again, he returned to take up an empty, purposeless thing, — a thing, indeed, that was worse than purposeless, for its sole power was to remind him of the purpose with which he had once vivified it. There was no longer anything in it for him, — not even the

solace of work for work's sake, as there had been before he knew Margaret Helm. On the contrary, as he approached the point of resuming his political campaign, his anticipation was not only utterly devoid of interest, but was sickened with loathing and revulsion. His inclination was to turn and flee from Bracebury, as he had fled from the mountains of West Virginia.

He made his way, therefore, to Bracebury leisurely, with no effort to reach the town before the day on which the convention was to meet. He did not even communicate with his friends until the morning of that day, on his arrival at Yardley. It was not until he had left his horse at Yardley and had taken the train for Bracebury that the full repellent force of the work to which he was speeding bore on him overpoweringly.

Then first came the suggestion of relief. He played with it a little, even smiled at it once, held it away from him, drew it back; contemplated it from various sides: self-indulgently, as if he recognized himself as a child with a toy, — with profound concentration a few seconds later.

Within ten minutes after the idea had been

born he had accepted it as a finality and had decided his future. He would withdraw from the campaign for Congress. He would quit politics. He would turn his back upon the whole hollow, degrading business.

He settled back in his seat as if for the first time he had found a position of comfort. Some might say, he reflected, that he owed it to his friends to push his candidacy to the end, especially as he was practically sure to win, but it was more his fight than his friends', and in this instance he owed less to them than to himself. He would not sacrifice himself to the interest of others, particularly when that interest was mainly sentimental. Poindexter was the only one who might feel that he had real cause of complaint. He had promised to use his influence as a Congressman to secure the office of Internal Revenue Collector for Poindexter. Well, he would not be Congressman — and that would count for much — but he could still use what influence he might have for Poindexter. If that should not satisfy Poindexter, then to the devil with Poindexter. He should have had nothing to do with Poindexter, anyway. He was in no mood now to consult the code of "honor among thieves."

He would not only withdraw, but he would swing his following to Sidney Garrard and insure his nomination. Some of Tunstall's delegates, he was aware, might mutiny, but that would not matter. Garrard already lacked but a few votes of the number necessary to nominate, and it would be easy for Tunstall to throw those to him. Indeed, Tunstall admitted that with himself out of the contest it would be almost impossible to prevent enough of his supporters going over to Garrard to nominate him, in preference to any other man in the district that could be pitted against him.

Let it not be inferred that in determining to nominate his rival in love as well as in politics Tunstall was impelled by any motive of romantic self-abnegation and heroism. He acquitted himself of any such incentive. For one thing, he was no longer a rival of Sidney Garrard for the love of Margaret Helm. Margaret was no longer a possibility to Tunstall. If she had been, he would never have surrendered to any one an inch that could have helped to advance himself in her favor. More than that, Tunstall realized, without compunction, that if Margaret Helm had been still a possibility, and he had been compelled to retire

from the Congressional race, he would not have been equal to bestowing on any lover of Margaret's an honor that might have strengthened his suit. Tunstall was human, and he was honest with himself.

Tunstall liked Sidney Garrard. He even admired him for the things which he sometimes laughed at to Garrard's face. With his own abandonment of politics, and with Margaret Helm out of consideration, Tunstall wished to see, even to help, Garrard attain his ambition. Besides, some day, in all probability, Margaret Helm would be Garrard's wife, and it was much to feel that in furthering the fortunes of Garrard he would be doing something for Margaret Helm. But it was at this point that the human nerve in the man was to ache most sharply. He would have done anything for Margaret's happiness, and yet when it came to doing it through helping one who was perhaps to take the place in her heart that he himself had hoped to hold, Tunstall shrank in acute, though momentary anguish and rebellion. No man ever loved a woman if he was superior to this feeling of rebellion at the thought of any other man in her arms.

At the first station where the train stopped after Tunstall had made his decision he went out and telegraphed John W. Driggs at Bracebury: "*Don't allow a ballot before I arrive, at two o'clock.*" Then he returned to his seat in the car and pondered the plan to be put in operation when he should reach Bracebury.

Two methods of action occurred to him. One was simply to withdraw, in favor of Garrard, and at the same time quietly transfer enough of his following to Garrard to make sure his nomination. This course, sprung so abruptly on the convention, would be somewhat theatric, and would impress some of his adherents with the idea that in failing to take them into his confidence he had not treated them with sufficient consideration. It would also perhaps alienate some of them from him beyond the limits within which they could be controlled by his organization. This, however, as already suggested, would be immaterial. So few additional votes were needed by Garrard that Tunstall knew that more than the necessary number could be counted on. For the possible weakening, or even collapse, of his own organization Tunstall cared nothing. Quitting politics entirely and permanently, he had no

further use for an organization. He would have preferred, out of regard for his supporters, not to wait thus till the last hour before confiding to them his decision to withdraw, but it was not worth while to concern himself about that. He could not have confided to them his decision before he had made it. As for the theatric aspect of the proceeding, he did not give that a second thought. Of two effective means of accomplishing an end, one theatric and the other not, the politician usually chooses the theatric.

The second method of action, which Tunstall reviewed briefly, was more indirect, and would have appealed to him more strongly if he had not lost all interest in making an adroit political play merely for the love of the play. It contemplated that he should not openly withdraw from the contest, but that ostensibly he should fight it out. The balloting would begin, and the deadlock between Garrard, Poindexter, and himself would result. This would be protracted by Tunstall until it had the appearance of a stubborn struggle, and finally, at Tunstall's secret dictation, enough of Poindexter's delegates should go over to Garrard to nominate him, instead of carrying out the terms of the

deal between Poindexter and Tunstall to go over to Tunstall. The consequence would be the nomination of Garrard, no less at the instance of Tunstall by this method of procedure than by the more direct one. Moreover, it would have the merit of leaving the public and Garrard himself under the impression that he had won by his own efforts, after the contest had been fought out on the ground of Tunstall's choosing. Victory coming to Garrard thus would no doubt be more gratifying to him than if he knew it to be owed to Tunstall's unexpected and unexplained generosity. But that consideration had no weight with Tunstall; or if it had, it was to turn him against it. Even if he had a heart now for conducting such a tactical manœuvre as this, he was so human as to prefer, if it came to analyses of motives, that in the future years, with their possibilities of what Sidney Garrard might be to Margaret Helm, she should not be wholly ignorant of what Morgan Tunstall, who she would know had loved her also, had done in Sidney's behalf. Perhaps she would even understand that he had done it more on her account than on Sidney's.

XXV

MORGAN TUNSTALL CARRIES OUT HIS DECISION

WHEN his train arrived at Bracebury Tunstall was met at the station by John W. Driggs and two or three others of his lieutenants. Driving to the town hall, they found that the convention had reassembled but a few minutes before, and Hoard was just beginning his speech placing Garrard in nomination. Tunstall went to one of the little rooms back of the stage, and sending for half a dozen of his leaders notified them of his decision to withdraw and throw his influence to Garrard. They were astonished, but had little to say. They knew Tunstall well enough to realize that it would be useless for them to say anything. They could not fathom his motives, nor did he explain, beyond his answer to one who burst out with:

"Holy Moses, Mr. Tunstall, what does it all mean?"

"That I have changed my mind," he replied, "and am done with politics. I am sorry if I seem to have imposed upon you, gentlemen, but I had no such purpose. Up to an hour ago I had fully intended to keep on with the thing."

Two or three of them laughed faintly and spoke meekly.

"Well, I reckon, if you can stand it, we can," said one of these.

Two or three others darkened sullenly, but made no open protest. John W. Driggs, with his thumbs under his suspenders, looked from one to another and remarked with equable resignation:

"Well, boys, the old man always knows what he's about."

Squire Breckinridge Bodine's eyes batted weakly, and he fanned himself nervously with his hat, but his only utterance was a short-breathed —

"Lord 'a' mercy!"

The one man who openly rebelled against Tunstall's announcement was Shelby Letcher. Leaning forward and shaking his long finger in Tunstall's face, he served notice:

"It's preposterous, Morgan Tunstall, and

we are not going to submit to it. You can't trifle with us this way. It 's too late to talk about withdrawing when you are in an hour of a sure nomination, and I hereby notify you, if you attempt it, I 'll go before the convention and say on the floor what I 'm saying here, and, by the Eternal, we 'll nominate you in spite of yourself! "

"And I 'll go before the convention," Tunstall smiled in reply, "and tell them flatly that I 'll refuse a nomination if given me. Instead of making the speech you threaten to make, Mr. Letcher, I urge you, as a friend of mine, a friend of Sidney Garrard, and above all a friend of the Democratic party, to go before the convention and not only withdraw my name but second the nomination of Sidney Garrard. You are the one man to make that speech. And you might as well, for Sidney is bound to be nominated, anyway."

"I 'll see you in Jericho first, sir! "

Nevertheless, after a ten minutes' argument, during which Tunstall pressed most of the points which Mr. Letcher subsequently repeated as his own in the speech reported in preceding pages, the old gentleman reluctantly surrendered.

In the convention hall the clamor was now tumultuous. The county of Luttroll had been called, the demonstration in favor of Tunstall was in progress, and the cries for Letcher had already reached the old war-horse, who with head uplifted was drinking in the sound.

"Now seems to be your time, Mr. Letcher," Tunstall smiled.

The veteran buttoned his coat and cleared his voice, as he went to the door.

"I am ready for them, sir," he replied, leaving the room and crossing over to the wings, whence he stepped out on the stage.

Most of the others who had been in the room were now, at Tunstall's suggestion, joining their delegations on the floor of the convention, in order better to assert leadership of them in the new and unforeseen turn of the situation. Tunstall, accompanied by Driggs, had just stepped through the door to follow Shelby Letcher toward the stage when Poindexter, purple and panting, rushed up.

"What is this damned rot I hear, Tunstall, about your fluking and throwing the race to Garrard?" he demanded.

Tunstall paused. "I suppose that is about the size of it, Poindexter," he replied. "I've

concluded to quit and do what I can to nominate Garrard. I sent for you half an hour ago to tell you this, along with the other boys, but you were not to be found."

"And you mean to stand here and tell me to my face that you have thrown me down?"

"Well, Poindexter, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I confess that you have not entered into the considerations that have governed me in this matter."

"In short, sir, you openly acknowledge that you have repudiated your — your agreement with me!"

"Not so extreme as that, Poindexter. My agreement was that if you would co-operate with me in this canvass, when I got to Congress I would recommend and urge your appointment as Collector for this district — I speak freely in the presence of John here, for he knows of the arrangement already. But I am not going to Congress; though I will still use my influence to get you the appointment, if you think it will do you any good."

"Good! Hell! What good can anybody's influence do me if the man who is going to

Congress is Sidney Garrard? He 'll name the Collector, and you know perfectly well he 'd no more think of naming me than he would of naming John W. Driggs there himself."

"Well, I 'm sorry things have got into this mess, Poindexter," Tunstall said, taking a step forward. "We 'll talk it over later this afternoon. Come on: Mr. Letcher is making a speech, and we don't want to lose that."

Tunstall started toward the wings of the stage, but Poindexter did not move.

"We *will* talk it over later," he called after him; "and I give you fair warning, Morgan Tunstall, that if you go on with this welching business we 'll have a settlement as well as a talk. There 's yet time for you to stop this sell-out, and, by God! you 'd better pull in your ropes before it is too late, if you don't want them to stretch your own neck."

Tunstall, paying no attention to this, went on and stood in the wings, where he could see and hear Shelby Letcher without being seen himself by those in the auditorium; while Poindexter hastened down to that portion of the convention hall assigned to the delegates from the Pocket.

Tunstall missed nothing of the effect —

already indicated in this chronicle — of Shelby Letcher's speech on the delegates. He noted their commotion following the first intimation that his name was not to be placed before them; the suspense with which they awaited a fuller revelation; the dismay among his followers on the definite announcement of his withdrawal and of his desire that Sidney Garrard receive the nomination; the bewilderment of the Garrard forces, and the rage of Poindexter's men from the Pocket. He smiled more than once at the Old Hickory's patronage and egotism in seconding the nomination of Sidney Garrard, and he observed that these were not lost entirely on the audience, but to some extent relaxed the tension produced on it by the first half of the speech. As Shelby Letcher finished his peroration and walked to the back of the stage to a seat, there were two seconds of dead silence in the hall. Then there were hand-clappings on the stage, followed at length by a rousing cheer by the Garrard delegates, led by Nelse Tigert. Tunstall's supporters were motionless and silent in their seats, with a few exceptions here and there who sang out with forced cheerfulness, "What's the matter with Tunstall? He's all right!" or, "Hurrah for

Tunstall and Garrard!" Over in the corner of the representatives of the Pocket, where such an outburst of indignation had at one time interrupted Shelby Letcher's speech, a more methodical expression of contempt was now audible and visible. Groans and taunts were measured out in chorus. References, direct and indirect, to Tunstall were greeted with sarcastic exclamations and derisive laughter. Above the concerted clamor individual voices shouted: "How much did he get?" "Morgan T.—C. O. D.!" "Everybody step up and get a transfer check!" "And Tun, he got de mon!" "Stand up, Tunny, and tell us all about it!" "Yes, come out and show yourself, Tunny!" Soon this last phrase was taken up in chorus, and the whole Pocket crowd sang out with insistent reiteration, "Come out and show yourself, Tunny."

It was not long before this provoked the other delegates to counter demonstrations. The Garrard men now cheered lustily for Tunstall, while most of Tunstall's original supporters, who up to this point had been rather quiet, jumped to their feet and fiercely yelled back the name of their leader to the insults of the Pocket. This continued, without sign of

abatement, for two or three minutes, when the Chairman, looking around and seeing Tunstall standing in the wings calmly surveying the turbulent scene, got up and crossed over to him.

"Morgan," he said, "they seem determined to have you, and I believe myself a few words from you would do more than anything else to end this."

"I was just thinking that perhaps I ought to say something," Tunstall replied.

The Chairman took him by the arm, and as they walked down to the front of the stage the auditorium resounded with shout upon shout that completely submerged the noise of the Pocket delegates.

Tunstall stood waiting for the tumult to subside.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the convention," he finally began; but he got no farther. The Pocket delegates, standing in their chairs, started a determined effort to cry him down. They would not hear him, and did not propose that anybody else in the hall should hear him. Their mouths were wide with hoots, howls, cat-calls, and varied objurgations. The air was raucous with tin horns.

"Take him out!" "Sit down!" "Go hang yourself!" were among the distinguishable words to which the horns furnished accompaniment. Upon the orchestra railing, not six feet away from Tunstall, Dunk Peabody had climbed, and with his coat under his arm and his hat in his hand describing many fantastic gyrations, he was catching up and passing on, as he bobbed about on his narrow footing, every phrase that sounded like an intended insult to Tunstall. The Chairman, energetically pounding the table with his gavel and violently commanding order, only added to the disorder.

Tunstall suspended all effort to speak. He could not have been heard by even Dunk Peabody. He remained standing, patiently waiting his opportunity, his purpose not to be driven plainly indicated in posture and feature.

It continued thus for ten, twenty, forty minutes. Twice again, as the din in the Pocket died away, apparently from exhaustion, Tunstall essayed to speak, only to desist as the protestations burst forth with renewed violence. After the last of these attempts he had settled back against the Chairman's table, supporting himself against its edge, in an attitude that so clearly implied his determination to make the

resistance of the tactics employed against him a matter of physical endurance, that his friends and those of Garrard among the delegates gave him a ripping cheer. They were powerless to do more in such an emergency, except to throw the disorderly delegates bodily out of the hall. Some of their hot-heads urged this course, but were discountenanced by the more diplomatic leaders, who had an eye to "harmonizing" the party after the nomination should have been made.

Whether the Pocket men were impressed by Tunstall's evident purpose not to yield, or whether their exertions finally wearied them beyond longer spirited perseverance in their course, Tunstall, in the end, had his way. It may be that the incident of Dunk Peabody's disappearance from his place on the orchestra railing had something to do with the humor of the Pocket which gave Tunstall his chance. Dunk certainly showed no signs of wearying; on the contrary, he seemed to grow more agile and more vociferous the longer he remained at his conspicuous post of service. Finally, as he was swirling his coat on high in launching a sweeping imprecation upon "plutycrats and their minions," the big form of Nelse Tigert

made its way to the railing and clasping Dunk around the waist, pulled him down.

"Come on, Dunk," Nelse said; "you've got a seat in the Luttroll delegation, an' we're lonesome without you."

As Nelse marched down the aisle with Dunk tucked under one arm, Dunk's coat, hat, and tongue frantically active at one end and his feet at the other, his progress was greeted by the first general laughter of the session, in which even the Pocket delegates joined. It is true that one of these advanced hastily toward Nelse, as he reached the Luttroll section of seats, with the apparent design of rescuing Nelse's captive, but Nelse, grinning, turned at bay and assuming a position as if to defend himself, with Dunk Peabody's rear extremities trained on the enemy, gave warning:

"Better stand back there, podner; you're liable to git kicked by Dunk, an' Dunk is a powerful bad kicker when he's good an' riled by the plutycrats."

Innocent reader, do you cavil at anything set down in these pages as a libel on the dignity and wisdom with which the sovereignty of our free people asserts itself? Then, if you would remain innocent, seek no information of

those who know how the conventions that make our legislators, executives, and judges are often conducted.

Nelse Tigert's ludicrous coup and his novel method of defence scored such a hit with the overwrought delegates that any more strenuous purpose seemed for the moment forgotten, or at any rate minimized, and the laughter that followed the incident was still rippling on the outskirts of the crowd when Tunstall again began his remarks, with so little interruption now that he took no notice of it.

He did not say much, but what he said, and the manner of his saying it, left no doubt of his sincerity and firmness. With terse incisiveness he repeated to the convention substantially what he had told his friends in the little room back of the stage. He had made up his mind to quit politics; he could not accept a nomination or election; he was sorry that he had not formed this resolution much sooner; he was sure that Sidney Garrard would make them a better Congressman; he was honest in his conviction that Garrard's nomination, with the objects both of securing a progressive and fearless Representative and of promoting the interests of the party in the district, was now

the best nomination that could be made; he was grateful to those who had stood by him, and regretful, only in consideration of them, to take the action he did; to those who impugned his motives, he had nothing to say.

The speech seemed to impress the convention as a finality. It was followed by little manifestation of approval or disapproval, the delegates settling back in their seats in quiet readiness for the order of business.

The call of the counties was concluded without any additional speeches, and the long-awaited ballot began. Though the Tunstall delegations, when polled, cast some scattering votes for men who had not been placed in nomination, the votes of the entire delegations, under the unit rule, were registered in accordance with the choice of the majority for Garrard. The Pocket counties stood doggedly by Poindexter. By the time Luttroll County was reached, with the announcement of its solid vote for Garrard — including the unwilling vote of Dunk Peabody, under the unit rule which he had earlier in the day so ardently demanded — Garrard's nomination was assured.

This, of course, was the signal for another demonstration for Garrard, and as the delegates

were loudly calling his name and clamoring for a speech, the Chairman appointed "the Hon. Morgan Tunstall and the Hon. Leonidas Cox Poindexter a committee to wait upon and escort to the stage our next Congressman, the Hon. Sidney Garrard."

Tunstall, who after his remarks to the convention had sat down in one of the stage seats, rose and went in search of Garrard. In the wings he came face to face with Poindexter, hurrying up from the auditorium. Poindexter's usually florid face was very white, and as he met Tunstall he stopped directly in front of him.

"You damned traitor!" he bit out, and with his soft felt hat, which he was carrying in his hand, struck Tunstall a vicious blow squarely on the mouth.

Tunstall, with clenched fist, sprang at his assailant, but there was a muffled report of a pistol from Poindexter's coat-pocket, and Tunstall, clutching at the canvas of one of the side scenes of the stage, sank to the floor.

XXVI

THE SUNLIGHT ON THE WALL

FROM the first Tunstall felt that his wound was mortal. As he lay in his bed at the Bracebury hotel, on the day following the convention, he was facing death with an equanimity that approached content. Once he wondered whether, if he knew that resistance would defeat death, he would care to resist. The fact that he did not now care to resist, that he did not care whether he lived or died, was the best evidence to him that benignant Nature had already administered to him that blessed anodyne which she reserves for those at whom she is about to strike her last blow. Aside from this natural dispensation, this release from responsibility and desire, Tunstall did not ask himself — or if he asked he did not take the trouble to decide — whether, if he could, he would have ordered his fate otherwise. He was no coward, nor was he given to morbid exaggeration, but Nature's anodyne must have been materially

aided by his state of satisfaction that the future which lay in wait for him only yesterday had been cheated by Poindexter's bullet. Certainly he harbored no vengeful feeling toward Poindexter.

But there was one recurring irritant, one persistent obstacle to the serenity of his last hours, which he pondered as he lay with closed eyes in his shaded room, and which grew more disturbing the more he pondered it. There was something he had left undone, something he had yet to do before he died. He had hastened away from Grace Knowles in West Virginia without considering the possibility of her revealing to Margaret Helm the secret from whose blight she had been so carefully protected. Had Grace Knowles, while he was pursuing his selfish flight through the mountains, revealed to Margaret that secret? It is true he recalled now that in his interview with Grace Knowles she had said that nothing could ever induce her to make such a revelation to Margaret, and at that time she undoubtedly had meant what she said. But who could tell when she might change her mind, or yield to some sudden impulse, and betray everything to Margaret? Was there enough good, with

enough strength, in Grace Knowles to enable her always to resist the instinct of motherhood, or the temptation to thrust herself into Margaret's purer and brighter world, at the cost of afflicting her with the knowledge of her origin's shame?

The risk was too great. It must be removed. That must yet be his task. He must not die, he would not die, before he had attended to that. If it was in his power to prevent it, Margaret should never know her mother's identity or story.

But could he prevent it? How was he, a dying man, to prevent it, if Grace Knowles should will otherwise?

He did not know how, but he would prevent it. He would make sure of it — he still had that confidence in himself — though the grave was now but a step before him.

The first thing to be looked after was the arrangement of an interview with Grace Knowles. One of his physicians being in the room, Tunstall asked if he knew whether any one from Luttroll County was still in Bracebury.

"Oh! yes," was the response. "Mr. Garrard, both of the Letchers, Mr. Nixon, and

John Driggs have all been up to ask about you in the last hour."

Tunstall thought over the list. He believed he could call upon any one of them to do him the service he now desired, but there were reasons why it might be best not to call upon the first three in this particular instance.

"I wish to see Driggs," he announced.

"But you know you are not to see any one yet awhile."

"You suggested this morning that it might be prudent to put my affairs in order."

"Oh! that is always well."

"Then send for John Driggs. I want him to put them in order for me. Besides, doctor, it is n't worth while trying to deceive me. I know my condition as well as you do."

"Your case is not at all hopeless. I 'll send for Driggs if you will have as little to say to him as possible."

"There 'll be little to say."

When Driggs entered and took a seat by Tunstall's bed, the two men clasped hands in silence. Then Tunstall came directly to the point.

"I want you to do something for me, John."

"Anything on earth, Mr. Tunstall."

"Find Grace Knowles and bring her here as quickly as you can. She was at —— Springs ten days ago."

"You may certainly count on me."

"Better not mention my name in the matter. You would have trouble in getting her to come if she knew it was to see me. Invent some pretext to get her to the hotel here and into this room without letting her know that I am here. You can manage it, can't you?"

"I can, and will."

For half a week after Driggs' departure Tunstall lived and waited. At the end of the second day he received a telegram which greatly strengthened him in his fight to prolong his life. It was from Driggs, and read:

"*Start at once with Mrs. K. Will reach Bracebury Sunday afternoon.*"

In the mean time Tunstall's brain was busy with the problem he had set himself: How was he to make sure that Margaret Helm should be guarded from the wretched knowledge of her birth? How was he to deal with Grace Knowles to effect this end?

Many plans were conceived, weighed, and dismissed, until finally he settled on two. He

would try the first, and if that should prove unsuccessful, he would have recourse to the second, which must not fail. With this conclusion Tunstall's mental faculties found grateful release from further responsibility in that direction, and he closed his eyes restfully. He had only now to live until he had seen Grace Knowles and carried out one of his plans or the other.

John Driggs returned Sunday afternoon. As he bent over Tunstall and took him by the hand, he did not need to ask how he was. The nurse had told him that in the corridor, and Tunstall's haggard face told him even more impressively.

"Well, Mr. Tunstall, I am back," he said simply.

"Thank you, John," Tunstall replied in a voice whose weakness betrayed no less than his face did the ground he had lost since Driggs had seen him. "Is she with you?"

"Yes, sir. I left her in the parlor."

"Does she know she is to see me?"

"Oh! no, sir. I didn't mention your name. I made up a yarn of my own."

"Bring her up, please, at once."

"All right, sir."

Driggs rose and was crossing the room when Tunstall added:

"Leave her in here and shut the door. You stand outside, please, and keep others out."

"Yes, sir."

Tunstall lay with closed eyes and listened to the step of Driggs creaking along the corridor and then down the stairs. "Driggs is doing his best to walk softly," he thought, and smiled. Then the creaking ceased and there was silence, broken only by the groans of a heavily loaded wagon in the street and by the lazy chant of the wagon driver.

After a little the creaking on the stairs began again. "Driggs is having no trouble in getting her here," ran Tunstall's active brain. "I knew I could rely on him. Driggs would have made his mark in the world if his field had been a wider one."

As the steps approached down the corridor, the rustle of skirts became audible, and Tunstall raised his head a little higher on the pillows, his face assuming the expression of power and will which the painter's brush and even in a greater degree the photographer's camera invariably caught and perhaps exaggerated.

There was a pause outside the door, which opened and closed again, leaving Mrs. Knowles standing before Tunstall. For a little, while her eyes were adapting themselves to the darkened room, she did not move. Then she walked over lightly to Tunstall's bedside.

"Mr. Driggs," she said, stooping over Tunstall, "told me that —"

She suddenly recoiled with a startled and terrified "You!" repressed almost to a whisper; then turned to flee to the door. Halfway across the room, she tottered with faintness and grasped the back of a chair for support.

"Don't leave yet," Tunstall called to her, in a tone at once of reassurance and command. "I have sent for you because I must have a short talk with you; and I shall not last much longer to have it."

She was shaking and sobbing now in the weakness of her shocked nerves.

"I'll wait till you become calmer," he said. "There isn't much to say; but that must be clearly comprehended by each of us."

He lay silently watching her while she dried her eyes and gradually checked her sobs. Finally she drew herself erect and turning

abruptly toward Tunstall, demanded, with a flash of anger in her eyes:

"What do you want with me?"

"A last understanding."

"Well?"

"I must be satisfied before I die (I am not satisfied yet) that Miss Helm will be safe from you — that you will not tell her who she is — if I leave you in the world with her."

"What do you mean?" she panted, a tremor of alarm modifying the challenge of her voice.

"I mean that ever since you told me that — Miss Helm was your daughter — "

"I told you what?" she interrupted in shrill astonishment.

"I do not care to repeat those words. But — "

"I told you no such thing!"

"Come! Don't waste time. When you told me that, in the woods that day — "

"I told you no such thing, I say! I remember I started to tell you — after you had become so indignant at the very thought of my daring to venture within sight or hearing of Margaret Helm — that she was my daughter's life-long, dearest friend, when you so suddenly stopped

me by flying at my throat as if to strangle me, and left without —"

Tunstall, notwithstanding his weakness and his wound, had jerked himself up on his elbow, and his countenance underwent a transformation that suppressed Mrs. Knowles' words and held her as if fascinated. Blank incomprehension, vivid comprehension, fleeting, poignant humiliation for his mistake, in turn swept away by a flood of joy and thankfulness, were graphically depicted on his wasted face, as he stared at Mrs. Knowles, his speechless mouth half open.

"This — this is the truth?" he finally asked, in a low-pitched voice.

"Of course it is. It never crossed my mind to say that Margaret Helm was my daughter, but I *was* glad to let you know that the girl you had such a horror of me even speaking to was my daughter's best friend."

Tunstall sank back on his pillow with a sigh of profound relief. "Thank God!" were the words his lips, all his being, breathed, though they reached Mrs. Knowles only as an indistinguishable murmur.

"My daughter lived in the same town in Virginia that Margaret Helm lives in." Mrs.

Knowles spoke hurriedly, as if impelled by the spell of the subject. "They gave her another name there — Elsie Russell. Perhaps you have heard Margaret Helm speak of her," a little wistfully, almost interrogatively. "She and Margaret were inseparable from childhood, and after her death Margaret went abroad. When she came back this summer, and I found out she was up there in the mountains, I went there because I wanted to know Elsie's friend and because I hoped that sometimes she might talk to me of Elsie. And yet you — you would have denied me even that, Morgan Tunstall! Is there no end to your malignancy?"

Tunstall, whose eyes had been fixed dreamily on a faint beam of sunlight that flickered on the wall through the partially closed blinds, turned now to Mrs. Knowles.

"There is an end to everything," he said quietly, "and I shall deny you nothing more. I am sorry to have put you to the inconvenience of coming here, and Mr. Driggs will make what amends he can. Oh, John!" he called.

Driggs opened the door and entered.

"Mrs. Knowles is ready to go, John," Tunstall said. "Please do me one more service — won't you? — and look after her in any way

that will add to her comfort, or that she may suggest."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Tunstall; indeed, I will," Driggs answered humbly, as if he were already in the presence of the dead.

He stood with his hand on the open door, waiting. Grace Knowles caught her breath, a sudden surge of color in her face, her lips parting with the impulse to speak. But no words came; and seeking Tunstall's eyes, she saw that they were again fixed dreamily, in apparent forgetfulness of all else, on the flicker of sunlight on the wall.

Gathering her skirts cautiously in her hand, she turned away and with bowed head went noiselessly from the room, seemingly touched with something of Driggs' own humbled spirit. Driggs followed, gently closing the door.

The eyes of Tunstall remained long on the flickering sunlight. He had, indeed, forgotten Mrs. Knowles and Driggs, almost before they were out of the room. For the moment he had forgotten everything except that Margaret Helm was free from the menace he had believed hanging over her. Not only was he relieved of the thought, revolting in itself, that Margaret had in her veins the blood of Julius

and Grace Knowles, but he was relieved of the dread that she might some time discover that such a curse was upon her. He could think of Margaret now without sullying his thought of her by wondering how it was possible for such a girl as she to spring from such parentage; but, better than that, he could also think of her without the foreboding that she might find unhappiness and humiliation through her knowledge of such parentage. The golden sunbeam lengthened upward on the wall; through the open window the air stirred, languid with the warmth of the August afternoon; and across the peaceful town drifted the mellow tones of a distant church bell. For once Tunstall seemed at peace with himself and the world.

It should not be inferred that his discovery of the mistake he had made in assuming Margaret Helm to be Grace Knowles' daughter plunged him into anguished repining for what he had lost through that mistake. He was not harrowed, as he lay there now, by any delusions as to what might have been. If he should get well now, his attitude toward Margaret could not be different from what he had seen it must be on the day he had followed the wandering brook in the woods and had fought

out his fight while stretched on the ground beneath the pine. It is true he knew now that it was a mistake which precipitated that fight — a mistake which seemed a flimsy trick played on him by his own hastening senses — but it was a mistake which, as by a glaring flash, revealed and illuminated the impassable chasm between himself and Margaret, or all such as she. Margaret was not Grace Knowles' daughter, as he had then supposed she was, but what mattered that? She might have been. At any rate, Grace Knowles had had a daughter, and she might have been in innocence and loveliness all that Margaret was. Margaret had taken to her heart Grace Knowles' daughter; but even if she had not done so, no such girl as Elsie Russell might have been and as Margaret Helm was, could be for him, the self-appointed judge and executioner of Grace Knowles. His way, forever sundered from Margaret's, had been perfectly clear to him ever since those hours under the pine, and now that he knew it was an error which had shown him that way, the way itself remained, no whit less clear or fixed. He did not now even review his decisive conclusion then made, or its compelling motives. Nor had he a regret for any step he had taken

since, nor did he, to the last, have a vengeful feeling toward Poindexter, his murderer.

He died two days later, and as Sidney Garrard and Hugh Letcher stood beside him and looked down on him in his coffin, Hugh said:

"He had his faults, but perhaps, after all, it is death that unveils the real man. There is something godlike in the expression on his face now."

Sidney bent over and took Tunstall's hand for the last time, as he answered in a choking voice:

"He was a big man, Hugh — big as an opponent, big as a friend. And it would have been different for him if life had been such that he could have looked upon it with such an expression as this with which he looks upon death."

But the expression on Tunstall's face was only that which had come to it on the quiet Sabbath afternoon when he had turned from Grace Knowles to the flickering sunlight on the wall.

XXVII

INTO THE COMING SPRING

LATE in February, a year and a half after the events of the Bracebury convention, Sidney Garrard, serving his first term in Congress, left Washington for Kentucky, in order to be present at the wedding of Florence Letcher and Robert Nixon. Garrard would have travelled much farther than Kentucky to attend Florence Letcher's wedding, even if he had not known that Florence would have as one of her guests on this occasion Margaret Helm.

He had not seen Margaret now since the first of the winter, when he had stopped off, on his way to Washington, at the little Virginia town in which she lived. He had made several pilgrimages to this town during the preceding year and a half, and once, a few months after his nomination by the Bracebury convention, he had ventured an effort to find whether the time had yet come for him to press his love to an issue, and had quickly found that it had not.

With another woman he might have boldly taken the aggressive and won, but with Margaret he knew that such a course would be fatal, and that his one chance was in his patience to wait. But his patience was becoming precariously strained.

The afternoon before the wedding he had out his roadsters and started over to Letcher Tavern for Margaret, who had promised to drive with him, "if she could possibly get away." He was full of that promise of Margaret's.

"Don't you think," she had said archly, "you are asking a great deal of a girl to leave all these delightful wedding preparations and go off driving with a mere man?"

"But there is a house full of girls to attend to the wedding preparations," he had answered.

"That makes it all the harder for one of them to leave."

"Besides, there is something more than a mere man. There are the horses."

"Oh, those horses! Well, for the horses I would give up much. So I'll promise to go if I can possibly get away."

There had seemed something in her manner, if not in her words, that set his hopes tingling. If she had not been standing out on the front

porch, with two or three of the other girls chattering at her side and Shelby Letcher incessant in his personal inquiries about the "old-timers" at Washington, Garrard felt that, in spite of his patience, it would have been difficult for him to resist the impulse to gather her in his arms and take her, as the primeval in a virile man prompts him to take a woman, by sheer force that is not to be withstood.

As he turned his horses toward Letcher Tavern this afternoon, there was again in his blood the tingle of that new something in Margaret's manner, and he gave the eager animals a light hand. They dashed away at a speed that must have satisfied the most impatient lover; but it is a well-travelled bit of turnpike between the Garrard farm and Letcher Tavern, and a "rising politician" like Sidney could hardly hope to traverse it without interruption. To most of those he met or passed to-day he merely waved a salute and tossed a hearty word of greeting, but there were some who were not to be denied more leisurely and intimate interviews. Squire Breckinridge Bodine, for instance, pulled up his horse across the road, and waited for Garrard to halt alongside, which, under the circumstances, he could not

well avoid. Nor could he well pass on until the Squire had told him what "a grand reecord" he was making in Congress, how zealously and effectively Breckinridge Bodine had worked to get him to Congress, and how impossible it would be for Breckinridge Bodine to lose the next race for county court clerk if Sidney would only "suppote" him. Further along the pike Nelse Tigert, driving home from Plover with Mrs. Nelse Tigert, must have him stop to shake the pudgy hand of little Sidney Garrard Tigert. Then Dunk Peabody, astride of Rufe Wright's aged mare, planted himself leisurely in the middle of the road.

"Hello, Sid!" he called out cheerfully.

"How are you, Dunk?" Garrard responded, throwing his horses back on their haunches.

"Y' ain't done got th'ough Congriss already, is you?"

"Oh, no! I'm only home on a visit for a few days."

"I did n't 'low you was th'ough yit, fer you know we 're thes bankin' on you to do up ole Mark Hanna an' Jay Goul' an' the res' o' them plutycrats the fus chanst you git at 'em."

"And old Crœsus?" laughed Garrard. "You don't want me to skip him, do you?"

"An' ole Crœsus, too, dad-burn him! don't you go to skippin' any of 'em. That's what I tole the boys when I pulled off my coat an' went to 'lectioneerin' fer you."

"Yes; I remember you did finally fall in line for me before the election, Dunk."

"Fall in line fer you! Say, I ain't been able to borry a mount from Uncle Jesse Craik sence. He 'cuses me o' killin' that mule o' hisn 'lectioneerin' fer you. But I'd 'a' s'poted you, Sid, after you was nominated by the party, ef I'd 'a' had to kill a whole drove o' mules. I'm a hard-shell, Thomas Jefferson, Andy Jackson, Shelby Letcher Democrat, I am, an' I ain't never bolted a nomination er scratched a tickit yit. Say, len' me a bite o' tobacco, Sid."

Dunk compromised on a cigar, and Garrard drove on to Letcher Tavern.

Throwing the reins to Minus at the gate, he was entertained, while he waited on the porch for Margaret, by Shelby Letcher with a history of Andrew Jackson's fight against the United States Bank, accompanied with an urgent suggestion that Garrard apply the lesson in dealing with certain issues pending in Congress.

But Garrard was listening more attentively for the coming of Margaret than to the moral

of Jackson's veto of the bank's charter, and a new light was in his face before Margaret was visible at the turn of the stairway in the hall.

"So you did manage to get away, after all!" he said with ill-repressed exhilaration, as he took her hand for an instant.

"Yes," she replied with, it seemed to him, something of his own radiant spirit; "I could not resist such a day."

"And such horses."

"And such horses! Were not the day and the horses made for each other?"

"The quicker that young man gets married the better," muttered Shelby Letcher, as he watched the two go down the walk to the gate. "He 's thinking a plagued sight more of other things than he is of the United States Bank."

Margaret sprang up into the seat before Garrard could help her, and he, following, adjusted the robe about her with a solicitous care that even Minus must have understood in some degree had he not been occupied at the horses' heads.

"All right, Uncle Minus."

At this from Garrard, Minus stepped aside and the horses leaped forward, but were im-

mediately pulled down into their smooth, reaching stride that was the admiration of true lovers of the trotter. They had gone perhaps fifty yards when Minus shouted:

"Oh, Mr. Sid!"

Garrard brought the horses to a dancing stand, and looked around at the old negro.

"What is it, Uncle Minus?" he asked.

Minus shuffled slowly forward, his eyes on the ground, his head soberly turning from side to side.

"Mr. Sid," he said, as he came up to the wheels, "whut sorter pistol wuz dat?"

Garrard stared at the old man blankly.

"What pistol?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Dat ar pistol whut wuz fired f'om de b'loon dat time. Wuz she er 44 er 38, er whut?"

Garrard's burst of laughter was prevented by a smiling glance from Margaret.

"Have n't you quit worrying about that?" Garrard replied. "There was n't any such balloon, nor any such pistol. As I told you once, years ago, it was a joke of mine that I made up just to bother you with."

"I don't keer whut you call it — joke er no joke. Hit 's a sum, en a mighty good un, en it 's boun' to have er answer, en I ain't nuver

gwine res' in peace no mo' tell I works it out. Only you did fergit to say whut sorter pistol dat wuz, en 'pears lak I gotter right to know dat."

The horses were what Minus called "gaily," and they sped along the smooth turnpikes and elastic lanes with little restraint from Garrard. It was one of those days that sometimes come in late February, with all the brooding prescience of spring. Windless, cloudless, with a pervasive balm in the air and a softer blue in the sky, all the mellow fallow, all the tenderly greening pastures, all the stilled bareness of wood and thicket seemed swelling with the fecund trance of new life to be.

For a good ten miles the horses had their heads, making a semicircle around Plover and swinging back through the village. The talk of Margaret and Garrard was frivolous and inconsequential. For instance, driving down the long street of Plover, Garrard said, as they passed the establishment of Jaynes & Co.:

"Some time, when I get to be a celebrity, and a newspaper reporter is sent to ask me how I made my start in life, do you know what I shall tell him?"

"Oh!" with affected awe. "Are you going

to tell me before you tell the reporter? No celebrity ever did me that honor before!"

"I shall tell him that I made it — with my first quarter — in the little Kentucky village of Plover, in front of the store of one Hi Jaynes, by holding the horses of high and haughty ladies."

"And shall you tell him," Margaret laughed, "that a quarter was more than you deserved, considering that it was obtained under false pretences?"

"Probably not. But there are several things about that quarter I shall not tell the reporter. I shall not tell him, for example, that I have sacredly kept it ever since as my lucky piece, my talisman; that it has brought me all the good fortune of my life; and that if I have done anything or tried to do anything worth doing, or tried to be something that I was not then, the desire and the inspiration all date from the day I earned that quarter."

He took from his pocket a card-case and opening it, removed a piece of silver. "Would n't you like to see such a valuable coin?" he said, extending it to her.

She turned it over between her gloved fingers, eying it with mild curiosity. Garrard,

meanwhile, gazed hard at the ears of his horses, though he did not fail to note, out of the corner of his eye, first the dawning rose in Margaret's face, and then the smile with which she had taken the coin grow until her lips parted and her eyes twinkled.

"So you have kept it all these years!" she mused, without looking up from the coin in her hand.

"All these many and long years," Garrard answered solemnly, his eyes still well to the front, — "the longest, the most determined, the most despairing, the most hopeful years a man can ever know."

"Yes, it must be really several years," Margaret assented, slowly turning the coin from obverse to reverse and then again to obverse.

"Several! It is six — six full years next June! And during all that time that little piece of silver has never been out of my possession for an instant, until now."

Margaret handed it back to him with the merriest of laughs.

"Then you must be mistaken about the length of time you have had it. Have you noticed the date on it? It was coined only two years ago."

"Two years ago!" Garrard exclaimed, incredulous, staring at the minted date in astonishment. "So it was. I don't understand it. I—" he searched carefully through the card-case — "I have never kept any other money in this." He looked through his pockets in vain. "I can't imagine how it happened. I'm afraid I've lost it," he concluded disconsolately.

"Oh, well," Margaret cheerfully assured him, "the substitute seems to have served you as well as the original. You've had even better luck the past year or two than before."

"I'd rather have lost anything else I had," he said with such earnestness that Margaret did not laugh at him further, but called his attention to the flight of a pair of wild ducks far in the sky.

They drove homeward by the Old Mill Road, that skirted Tunstall Paddocks, now the estate of one of the wealthy New Yorkers who find it well to have a breeding-farm in Kentucky as an adjunct to their racing-stables in the East. They passed Garrard's own home, with Kate Cockerill running to the door to wave them a salute, and then struck into the stretch of road,

over which they had driven nearly six years before, to Letcher Tavern.

Their long and swift journey had taken the edge off the horses, and they were content to slacken their pace, in obedience to Garrard's pressure on the bits. As they passed under the wild-grape arch, Garrard pulled them to a walk.

"The Tavern is too near and there is too little of this rare day left to hurry through it," he said.

"Yes," Margaret assented, "drive slowly along here. It is the loveliest road we have been over to-day, and it may be winter again to-morrow. But this afternoon, and here, one may feel the spring, if he may not see it."

"But one may see it too, or at least some signs of it. Look how the stubble is being ploughed under yonder. Look what a commotion the crows are making over the ploughed ground. Look at those horses in the pasture there; do you notice how their shaggy winter coats are stained with clay? They have been lying down and rolling over and over in the good, soft dirt."

"And look at the pasture itself. Could anything be more exquisitely fresh than the new

green under the dead weeds and brown grass? And over there, along the river, can you not see a faint mist of color on the tops of the bushes? And, really, is n't that a redbud down there?"

"Surely you do not see a redbud yet! There is a redbud tree along here, but there is a dogwood beside it, and they always bloom together. You don't see any signs of dogwood blossoms, do you? And do you know what that odor is?"

"Of course! The odor of the ploughed ground."

"Do you smell that, too? I was speaking of an odor not so subtle — that of burning brush. You can see the haze of smoke, away over there in one of the fields behind Letcher Tavern. And you can also *hear* the coming of spring at Letcher Tavern, even at this distance. Have you ever noticed before, this winter, such an exuberant chorus from the Letcher Tavern fowls?"

"But listen to the river! What a crooning new song it has! It did not have it yesterday."

The slowly walking horses stopped, almost of their own accord, and Margaret and Garrard looked out over the peaceful scene stretching

to the widely circling horizon. Then they turned simultaneously to each other.

"Margaret."

"Yes," she faltered, her eyes falling in spite of her.

"Do you remember it was here, nearly six years ago, that you would not let me speak of what I most wished to speak of?"

"Yes," so low that he would not have been certain of it but for the motion of her lips.

"And of what I have most wished to speak of ever since?"

There was a moment during which she made no sign. Then there was a tremor of the lashes, and when she raised her eyes there was a light in them that not even the sun of such a day as this ever struck into the heart of the singing river. She laid her hand in his.

"I shall never tire of listening to it now," she answered.

It was an hour yet to Letcher Tavern, as Sidney Garrard drove, for there were many things to say and to hear, now that the last seal of constraint was removed from these two. Half of this hour had flown when Garrard was asking:

"Tell me, when did you know?"

"I — was not sure until recently — until this winter."

"Until some time after I saw you last in Virginia?"

She nodded affirmatively.

"That is no news to me," he said, as one who looks back on perils passed. "I have always known, until this last visit to Kentucky, that you were not sure."

"There is — something else I ought to tell you, perhaps," she ventured with a little hesitation.

"Tell me anything or nothing, as you like," he answered in content. "Nothing but what you have already told me to-day can matter now."

Away to the left, under the western sun, lay the fences and stables of Tunstall Paddocks. On the side of a low hill, in a clump of young pines and willows, was the family burying-ground, from which rose an ostentatious granite shaft erected in Morgan Tunstall's memory by some of his political admirers. Margaret's eyes rested on this monument for a little, and then she turned again to Garrard.

"While Mr. Tunstall was alive, I was not sure," she said simply.

"Yes, I understood that," was Garrard's quiet reply.

"And — and if he had not died, I am not sure even now whether in the end it would have been you or he."

"You have told me nothing that I did not know already, dear," Garrard said, pressing her hand, "and nothing that can make any difference now that I know that, whatever might or might not have been, it *is* I."

The horses picked their way along the smooth road toward Letcher Tavern. Behind now were Tunstall Paddocks and the granite column; in front, the sunlight on the broadening river. Margaret and Garrard, looking forward or into each other's eyes, went on into the coming spring.